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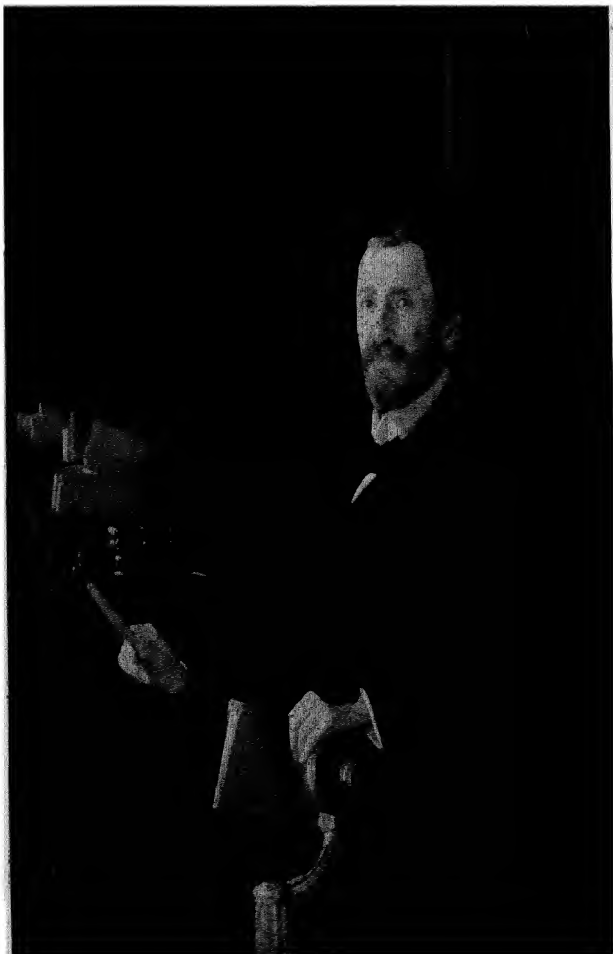
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WITH HORACE PLUNKETT  
IN IRELAND



THE RIGHT HON. SIR HORACE PLUNKETT, K.C.V.O.

Portrait by Dermot O'Brien, P.R.H.A.

WITH  
HORACE PLUNKETT  
IN IRELAND

BY  
R. A. ANDERSON

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

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TO

that great-hearted Churchman and Patriot, the

REVEREND THOMAS ALOYSIUS FINLAY

a Founder of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society and its Vice-President since 1895, this Record of National Effort is dedicated, in recognition of his services to Ireland in the cause of Co-operation and in gratitude for forty-five years of friendship and counsel



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## CHAPTER I

First Impressions of Horace Plunkett—Co-operative organisation before the advent of the I.A.O.S.

IN 1889 I had been installed as sub-agent to Lord Castletown with a modest salary and a free house in Doneraile. To me, that was comparative affluence; living in the country was cheap in those days, but my eldest boy had been born and expenses had begun to mount up. I still retained my Petty Sessions Clerkship at Doneraile, but the problem of the future was eternally before me. It was by no means easy to run even a very unpretentious establishment on £200 a year. One day I met Alexis Roche, Lord Fermoy's brother. Though I don't suppose we had much in common, he had been always very friendly to me. This day he stopped me and asked if I knew Horace Plunkett. I had to confess that I had not even heard of him. He then explained that Plunkett and he had been ranching partners and that Plunkett was coming to stay with him at Old Court. "P-P-Plunkett", said he (he had an appalling stutter), "is the s-s-strangest being you ever met. In f-f-fact he is like n-n-nothing on earth." It appeared that the main object of Plunkett's visit was to start a co-operative store in Doneraile on lines similar to that he had founded

at Dunsany in County Meath. This conveyed very little to me. I bought my pipe tobacco and cigarettes from the Army and Navy Stores but, beyond that, I was abysmally ignorant of what a co-operative store was like or how it might succeed in such a village as Doneraile. Roche suggested that I might help his friend with this venture of his and I readily agreed.

A few days afterwards—I remember it was one of the loveliest of lovely autumn days—I was passing Old Court and saw the commanding figure of Alexis, with a smaller man, on the lawn. He espied me and called me in. “This, H-H-Horace”, said he, to his companion, “is the chap I was telling you about.” I looked at the individual who was “like nothing on earth”—a thin, spare man, in his early thirties, with a prominent nose and keen, kindly eyes. He seemed amused at the brusqueness of Roche’s introduction and held out his hand. It seemed very limp in my firm grip and a passing chill of doubt seized me. All the men I knew had firm handshakes. This man’s hand had actually seemed to me to be flabby. I asked myself, was the man, too, flabby? It just shows how wrong one may be in his judgment if peculiarities of that kind are allowed to influence it. To the day of his death, I never knew Horace Plunkett to shake my hand with the smallest suspicion of warmth. It may have been due to the fact that he was never physically very strong. But if his grip had disappointed me, I was more than reassured by the friendliness of his look and his words. He had a very pleasant voice, though

it always seemed to me he had some difficulty in pronouncing the letter "r". He asked me a number of questions about my present work, if I had any spare time for other things, adding that he did not expect me to work for nothing. I told him I had plenty of spare time and that I believed I could easily arrange with my kind old chief, Matthew H. Franks, to allow me to take on outside jobs. Then Alexis asked me in to lunch and, after that was over, Plunkett talked to me in a way I had never heard man talk before. Most of what he said was Greek to me, and I was honest enough to say so. Plunkett saw how raw and ignorant of the world I was, but it only made him the more patient with me and the more earnest in expounding his strange new doctrine. Finally, he said he'd like to walk over to Doneraile with me, as he wanted "to see his old friend 'Barney' ". As I was leaving, I managed to whisper to Roche, "*Who* is Mr. Plunkett, anyway?" "Just another——'Honourable', like myself", he said. "His father was Lord Dunsany, and so he c-c-couldn't help it." Later it transpired that "Barney" was none other than my august employer, Lord Castletown. And so Plunkett and I walked into Doneraile and he had a look through the village. He walked amazingly fast and was always a bit ahead of me, talking all the time, while I listened. I brought him to my house and gave him tea. Not being familiar with social conventions, I was uncertain how to introduce him, whether as the "Honourable" Horace Plunkett, or as plain "Mr." However, I adopted the latter form. When

he had left, to "see his friend 'Barney' ", I pondered over all this strange man had said to me and tried to understand it. Apparently, his idea was to induce people to combine for business purposes and thereby to help themselves while they helped one another. And it was to be done without injury to property or person. In short, wealth was not to be taken from one class to enrich another, but actually to be *created*, by thrift, by honest dealing and by the loyalty of the participants in partnership one with another. All this had sounded most attractive, but it seemed rather Utopian. However, I had said that I would take a hand in the game and I was in for it now; so I determined to do my best.

Before very long we had started the Doneraile Co-operative Society in a most excellent shop. We had stocked it with goods, mainly supplied by the Co-operative Wholesale Society, and our first manager, also supplied by them, was a spick and span individual but quite inefficient, because he did not understand the people, nor they him. This store had to be a microcosm of the Army and Navy Stores in order to supply the needs of the proletariat, also to purvey such strange goods as pistachio kernels, the use of which I have never been able to divine, and pink sugar candy, for Doneraile Court. These particular delicacies were bought in bulk and could only be disposed of in sorry driblets. At each quarterly stocktaking, in which I always took a hand, these curiosities came up regularly for valuation, little diminished in bulk, but always calling for heavy depreciation. I don't think the trade of that

store ever exceeded £80 a week, and must have averaged about £40—the very lowest point at which a distributive society can be worked and pay its way, for the gross margin of profit can rarely exceed 14 per cent on such business. We started a bakery and there made a great mistake. We had a baker already in the village who turned out the most delightful bread. His loaves were things to dream of. They had four crisp peaks, each a thing of joy. They were made of the finest flour procurable and “Mickey the Fairy”, who baked them, was a master of his craft. The co-operative bread was excellent, but, somehow, it lacked the quality of that produced by “Mickey the Fairy”. Then our baker “went on the spree”. That ended the bakery. The store alternately waxed and waned, but the wanings came more frequently. The Saxon manager was exchanged for an energetic young native and for some years the store kept going, but, ultimately, it in no respect differed from the other shops in the village, except that its windows were always smarter and its goods a bit better, though no cheaper. Co-operation had completely disappeared from its programme. It was just a super-village shop. Ultimately it became a proprietary concern.

Despite its co-operative failure, this venture had done a lot of good. It made the village shopkeepers sit up, improve their premises and abate their extortionate prices. Once, I remember, we ran out of the higher-priced teas, for which there was the chief demand. Even the old woman who came in for her “pound of sugar an’ ounce of tay” wanted

the *very best* tea. The Saxon manager appealed to me, as secretary. I advised him to put the 3s. 4d. label on the big stock of 1s. 8d. tea we were carrying. He did so, and it sold like hot cakes! It is only in the very far west that the old tea drinkers can't be fooled by labels. There, they pay up to 5s. a pound for "tay". But *they* are judges; and any tea merchant will tell you that the western peasant buys the best tea that Mincing Lane can provide. It is their sole luxury. If they drink its infusion, or rather decoction, in their own way, a way that would poison us, they still drink a liquor which is produced from tea of a grade which the middle-class housewife considers too dear. Thus it is that one very seldom gets a decent cup of tea east of the Shannon while it is almost universal to the west.

I soon found that the Doneraile store was, relatively, an unimportant thing and that my real business, if I was to help Plunkett, lay among the farmers. He saw the decadence of the great dairying industry and, while he was then uninformed of the great revolution which had begun in Scandinavia, he divined the cause of the Irish dairying *débâcle* and had designed a remedy for it.

A co-operative creamery had been started at Dromcollogher, in the west of County Limerick, by Messrs. W. L. Stokes, the Co-operative Wholesale Society representative in Limerick, and Robert Gibson, a bit of a character, primarily a butter merchant, but very good in his second character, as an esoteric Buddhist. He read the *Grocers' Review*, the *Grocers' Gazette* and the *Light of Asia*



impartially. This co-operative creamery, the first of its kind, was organised by these two men under the advice and instruction of the Co-operative Union of Great Britain and Ireland. The same body provided the Dromcollogher farmers with a model code of rules and an admirable constitution. All should have gone well and, in fact, did go well with them for two years. But the usual weak spot revealed itself. The management was defective. However, it had lasted long enough to enable Horace Plunkett to hitch on to it his more ambitious programme.

For a brief space he worked alone, occasionally with the aid of Robert Gibson, but made little or no progress. The land agitation was still in full spate and feeling ran very high. Plunkett "spoke Englified", he was the son of a landlord, and a Lord, at that; he was a Protestant (though that didn't matter much) and, *surely*, he must be a Conservative. All these things made him suspect of an abnormally suspicious people. They had been sold so many times by specious people in the past; Plunkett, in their eyes and mind, was just such another. In order to combat suspicion Plunkett had managed to secure the services of a Nationalist member of Parliament, Mr. Mulhallen Marum, the hero of the famous escapade in which he rode a hunter up and down the marble steps of St. Canice's Cathedral in Kilkenny. Mr. Marum had spoken at several meetings with Plunkett and they were together, with the same object, at Listowel. After attending Mass there one Sunday poor

Marum fell dead. This tragedy shocked and saddened Plunkett deeply, but did not deter him from his task. Before I actually joined him in his work, he had attempted, aided by Gibson, to establish a creamery quite close to the walls of a demesne inhabited by his sister, the Hon. Mrs. Ponsonby, at Kilcooley in County Tipperary. The project got so far advanced that the foundations of the walls were laid and may, to this day, be seen. Then a political row began. I was not in it, so I cannot give details. But the foundations were never built upon. Gibson had been bidden to partake of the hospitalities of Kilcooley Abbey. When his hostess invited him at dinner to have a glass of wine, he replied, "No, I thank you, Madam, I am no wine-bibber. And", he added, "it is such as you, so-called moderate drinkers, that lead the youth of the present day to destruction and damnation." Mrs. Ponsonby asked the esoteric one if he wanted anything to read in his bedroom, on retiring. Gibson answered, "Madam, I have the *Grocers' Gazette* and the *Light of Asia*. What more can man want? But, I thank you." Gibson was a really fine fellow; he cared nothing for himself and was dead honest in his dealings. But he was always fanatical and sometimes quite impossible.

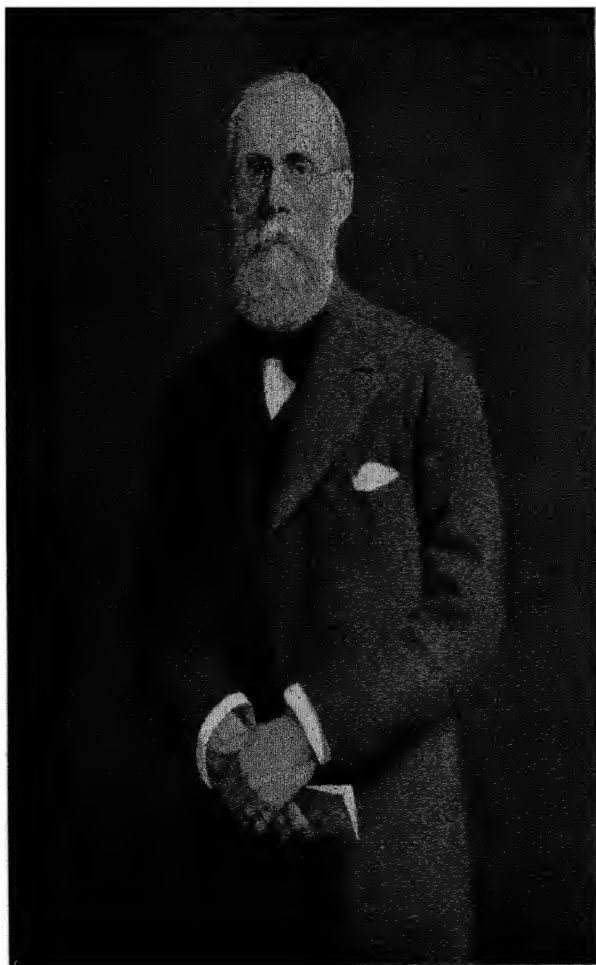
The abortive attempt at Kilcooley did not make things any easier for the new movement. The next essay was made at Ballyhahill, near Mount Trenchard, Lord Monteagle's house on the Shannon. There I was invited as a guest with Plunkett. Lord Monteagle had been an old friend of his. I was

made speedily at home. Lord Monteagle was beloved and respected by everybody, as was his due, for a finer specimen of an old-time gentleman I have never met.

I have met many remarkable men in my time, but none who was so fine a gentleman, in the highest and best sense of the term, and there was not, in my judgment, one who did finer work for agricultural co-operation in his gentle, quiet, persistent way. Perhaps he was not a man of outstanding ability, but he was a man of fine education, of stainless integrity and honour, brave but always gentle and conciliatory, though under his gentle, almost self-effacing manner, there lay a strength of will and a surprising determination. These qualities were never displayed unless he sensed that the truth, for which he always strove, was like to be assailed. He used to remind me of a benevolent eagle. He was very tall and slight. His nose was aquiline and his deep-set eyes were invariably guarded by glasses. He wore his beard long and also his hair. When he was in opposition to anything he regarded as being contrary to truth or justice, the gentleness fell from him as if it had been a cloak. All respected him; those who were privileged to enjoy his friendship loved him. He had his own share of humour and was nothing of an ascetic, though he lived without ostentation at Mount Trenchard, whose hospitable doors were always open to those of us who were working in the movement. He was always inclined to stay in the background and let others have all the credit for

anything that was accomplished; so few really knew what our movement owed him. "You know, R. A.," he said to me one day, almost sadly, "I am not as 'quick in the up-take' as Horace is." I am afraid that even Horace Plunkett never gave him the full measure of recognition that his tireless self-effacing work entitled him to have received. He may have been "slow in the up-take", but I never knew his judgment to be astray; so I am glad to say that I never failed to consult him about any problem that vexed my soul—and there were many—and he never failed me. He has gone from us and sleeps in his quiet grave on a bluff near Mount Trenchard, where each morning sun rising over his beloved Shannon does homage to a great Irishman who served his country faithfully and extended a boundless Christian charity to all, regardless of class or creed.

At this first venture it was he, rather than we, who secured the presence of the parish priest and all the prominent farmers, and the Ballyhahill Co-operative Dairy Society was started and is, to-day, as far as I know, flourishing. After the successful launching of Ballyhahill, I was allowed out on my own. I stuck closely to the line laid down rigidly for me by Plunkett, but adopted my own methods, based on my more intimate knowledge of the people I had to tackle. I had many rebuffs and disappointments, but I managed to start co-operative creameries at a dozen centres in the very first year. The slump in the price of firkin butter had driven the farmers into it. The Co-operative Union of Great



THE LORD MONTEAGLE OF BRANDON, K.P.

Portrait by Dermot OBrien, P.R.H.A.



Britain and Ireland had appointed me its Sectional Secretary and paid my expenses. Early in my co-operative career, when I was terribly "hard up", I received a cheque for £50 from Plunkett which was a godsend. With it came a very nice letter, in which he asked me to drop the "Mister". So, henceforth, until he was knighted by King Edward VII, he was always "Plunkett" in letter or speech. After that, he was always in speech "Sir Horace" though he was still "Plunkett" in all my letters. There was never any familiarity between us, such as existed between him and much more recent acquaintances. Not until a very few years before his death did he address me, as everybody now does, as "R. A.", and, of course, I never presumed to call him "Horace", as I often heard him addressed, to my disgust, by guests of his who were merely clever people, such as he always liked to have round him. All the same, I think he gave me more of his confidence than he gave to any other man and trusted me implicitly. I think I can say, truthfully, that I never once let him down. A great admiration, almost amounting to awe, was inspired in me for this frail but fearless and outspoken man, who habitually lived an abstemious, almost ascetic, life, drinking but rarely and then sparingly, smoking scarcely at all. He was horrified at the way I could drink whiskies and soda, and he rather frowned on my beloved pipe. But he soon found that nearly all the other young men of that day did the same, and so he tolerated my vices. He appeared to be tireless, his energy was perfectly amazing. I was young, healthy, strong as a horse,

but, for all that, he was ever the "better stayer". It was a mystery to me how he kept going. It must have been his indomitable spirit, for he was, physically, a weak man. Long before I was out of bed after a day of hard campaigning, he was up and dressed and had written half a score or more of letters, or drafted some memorandum dealing with his work. His marvellous energy used to fill me with shame, but I was forced to realise that I could not compete with him.

In those days he was an indifferent speaker, with rather a halting delivery, but the substance of all he said was admirable, clear and logical, and one always knew that he was sincere and in deadly earnest. Scores of times have I seen farmers at meetings addressed by him snigger at some slight blunder of his in misusing their terminology, but, as he continued, they ceased to scoff and became impressed with the force and truth of his arguments. Of course he always spoke before I did and usually delivered the same speech to all the audiences he addressed. I think he committed this speech to memory, for I could always tell what was coming. When he was done, I had to follow. His part was to expound co-operative principles and explain how they were to be applied; mine, to go into details, finance, profit-sharing, the method of paying for milk, the duties of committees, and so forth. I remember being in a horrible state of funk at the first few meetings, where I had to speak. All my ideas would go out of my head when I stood up, and, though I had made notes, I was almost too



nervous to read them. In addition to this, I had no natural gifts in that way. I hated the sound of my own voice, I felt hot and cold with shame at the clumsiness of my language and longed for the time to come when I could sit down and hide my diminished head. Until I met Plunkett I had had a pretty good conceit of myself, but he seemed so immeasurably superior to me that all my ignorant bumptiousness speedily evaporated. I actually began to fear that I would never do for this work—that I was too stupid, too nervous, too ill-educated. I confided my fears to Plunkett. He heard me out and then laughed: “Sonny,” said he, “none of us knows everything. But I can tell you that you know your job and know it well. All you need is confidence and a little practice and you will be a capital speaker. As it is, you never omit anything that matters, and you rub in your points very well. The farmers would far sooner listen to you than to me. You know how to talk to them and I don’t. Very soon you’ll be speaking for both of us, for I have other work to do.” All this he said so kindly and reassuringly that my drooping spirits revived. And it was even as he said. Practice gave me confidence and fluency, and, though I never became a good speaker, I could hold a big meeting together, interested all the time, for a full hour and often did so, even in the open air, in which many of our early meetings took place. I took care never to repeat myself, except to drive home an important point, and the subject of co-operation was so new, so diversified, such a revelation to them, that these

meetings of farmers never seemed to tire. Often, when I was almost exhausted, I'd be asked to "go on", to tell them more. I had soaked myself in all the lore relating to co-operation that I could lay my hands on and, as long as I was able to keep going, I preached this new gospel of self-help by mutual help to my patient hearers. In spite of my imperfections, which were many, and my antecedents (as connected with land agency), which made me to some an object of suspicion, I won over hundreds of converts, many of whom, to this day, still live and would give me kindly greeting if I could revisit them. My ambition would be to tour the whole field of my early endeavours. In all cases, except perhaps less than half a dozen, where the neighbourhood is dominated by individuals whose ideas are foreign to all that makes co-operation good, I know I'd have a welcome. And it is not given to every worker for economic reform to feel himself on such safe and friendly ground when he revisits the scenes of his first labours. As I never "painted the lily" for these people, and never indulged in fairy tales, but held out to them the prospect of much hard work and only a modest reward for it, there were many instances when I came back to be almost reproached for my restraint. For the benefits of co-operation had exceeded their expectations. Needless to say, these instances filled me with pleasure. I had got over my nervousness, had buried my "inferiority complex" (an expression unknown in those days), and I could face any kind of a crowd, even with a

hostile element in it; and there were plenty. I always spotted these people early in the proceedings; I knew the look of them and I used to watch, amused at their taking prominent seats in the gathering so as to be near to heckle. I loved those fellows! They gave me a grand target for my shots against gombeen men. When I had a good sprinkling of them, I used to be at my best. I used to let myself go at them. Plunkett mightn't have approved of it, but I wanted to stir up the sluggish farmers. After I had fired a few shots and sent them home, a mild cheer would arise from the back of the meeting. Greatly encouraged, I'd open fire with my heavy artillery on the gombeeners and it would seem that the entire gathering was with me. But, alas, this pluck, shown in the mass, when nobody could be singled out for victimisation, petered out sadly when even the most vociferous of my audience visited his overlord, the village shopkeeper. Perforce, "non-controversial" co-operation had to be preached in all but a few districts where the writ of the gombeen man did not run. In some cases, traders had even to be admitted as shareholders in co-operative creameries because they had acquired land, previously occupied by their unfortunate debtors, and owned many cows. These men always managed to get elected on the committee and dominated the policy of the society. Henceforth, except for dairying, co-operation was ruled out in that area. And, after nearly forty years, such is the static condition of our country, this same state of things still prevails.

I was always a whole-hog co-operator. And wherever I got the chance, I urged that the co-operative creamery should aim at doing all the farmers' business in the neighbourhood, whether agricultural or domestic. In this I succeeded very well, and quite early in my career; for these same societies are among the most prosperous of all that exist to-day.

I had many adventures in my work as a co-operative organiser. I once went to Skibbereen, whence the *Eagle* kept a careful watch on the movements of the Czar of Russia. My visit had been announced in that famous organ, and the ostensible object, it said, was to establish a co-operative creamery in the town. But the editor had smelt a rat and denounced co-operation, root and branch. He wrote a jeremiad against co-operation. In it he called on Plunkett, described as a "monster in human shape", to "cease his hellish work". He further described me as "Plunkett's Man Friday" and asked all good Skibbereen people to give me an empty meeting. The result was that the meeting was packed. I suppose they just wanted to have a something new to entertain them. Anyway, they rolled in. I delivered my usual harangue and ended up, unadvisedly, perhaps, with the suggestion that they should buy their artificial manures co-operatively. When I had done, up rose a stalwart, and evidently, gombeen critic. "Tell me," he yelled, in his high-pitched West Cork voice, "did ye ever *pierce* mingures?" I had to confess my ignorance. "There now," said he, "an' I piercin' mingures for

ye min all me life; this fella doesn't even know what it manes." The curtain was rung down and I made the best exit I could. I learned subsequently that cargoes of Peruvian guano used to be brought into Irish ports, and though the Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Act was a dead letter at that time, the importer used to test the value of the cargo, carried in bulk, by thrusting into the hold of the vessel an immense augur which brought out a sample of the stuff. I doubt if it was ever analysed, but I suppose the importer satisfied himself, through the evidence of his nose, and even of his palate. (For the potency of this sea-bird excreta fertiliser was not infrequently tested in this manner!) The value of fertilisers was, often as not, determined by their horrible stench, and sometimes by their hue. In those very early days a complaint once reached me that a special potato manure lacked, not savour, but colour. I interviewed the genial old maker of this stuff and put the case to him. "The stuff," said he, "is ever an' always the stuff I have been givin' to these bosthoons. 'Tisn't dark enough, moryah! Am I to be told at this day of me life to go out an' sweep all the chimneys of Mill Street an' the Coombe to gether soot to colour it to their fancy?" I had no answer to this ancient compounder of fanciful "special manures" which had no special value comparable with the price at which they were sold. So I had to get back to fundamentals and find out what these specifics contained. I got that information, and also the values of soluble and insoluble phosphates and of nitrogen

per unit. The "ould farmer" is no "dam' fool". Armed with my information, I spread it broadcast at every meeting I attended. The old boys would produce from the recess of a pocket a grubby envelope, "borry" a "pincil" and, after licking the latter, carefully figure out for themselves the value of the fertiliser offered. A few of the younger ones had reached the Sixth Standard and had a bowing acquaintance with decimals. They generally arrived at a pretty fair estimate of the manurial value of the stuffs they had been previously buying blindly. I thought little of this in those days. It was just all in the day's work. All the same, it meant the dawn of a small revolution. It brought kudos to co-operation and to me, its disciple. Had I known all about unit values when the Skibbereen *Eagle* pounced upon me, I could have made the vaunted skill of the expert in "piercing mingures" look ridiculous. But, just as were my audiences, I was supremely ignorant, and was only learning as time went on. I realised, all the time, how very little it was that I knew, even about my own particular job; so I studied the subject in all its bearings in such spare time as I had, which was but little. I also rubbed up my half-forgotten arithmetic, and I think I almost committed to heart all the salient features of the Industrial and Provident Societies Act. It was a case of *solvitur ambulando*; I learnt as I went on. I gave up pontificating; where I asserted anything new, I always gave my authority—usually a foreign scientist or economist, whose august name was uttered with deep emphasis and whose dictum was

usually accepted without question. And so I was rarely caught out. Of course there was always the possibility of being encountered by some irrelevant and blatant fellow at any and every meeting, who had enough wit to side-track me by introducing politics or some other tomfoolery. If I had a proper chairman, such side-trackers were soon shut up. Otherwise, I had to enter into a controversy with the obstructor, at the end of which the primary object of the meeting had been lost sight of by all but a few. This kind of opposition was irritating to a person of my temperament and often filled me with rage; still, I was slowly and painfully acquiring patience, the most precious and the most difficult virtue to which an organiser can attain. If I had known, or had been educated better, I would have realised that such interrupters merely furnished me with the best of all ammunition for my arsenal. The Irish audience is easily carried away by a flip-pant, especially if amusing, speaker; but they are also very quick to take up all the telling arguments. All I had to do, therefore, was to keep my head and quietly knock the bottom out of any relevant arguments, leaving the remainder unanswered. I am sure I missed many chances by my imperfections as a controversialist, by my hasty temper, and my zeal to promote what had almost become to me a religion.

Let those who read this try to realise the difficulties of even a gifted and well-educated man who should be suddenly called upon, wholly without preparation, to preach a new and by no means very

popular gospel to a people rendered intensely suspicious by previous adventurers. The very fact that I asked for no reward other than very strenuous work was in itself regarded as somewhat suspicious. Of course there was always a minority of clear-thinking men, usually the pick of the community, who were superior to this doubt. It was generally after a meeting had been held, when these men gathered round me, that we really got down to business. Whenever that happened, I felt sure that a society would result, and I was seldom disappointed. But almost everywhere there was opposition, from Cork butter merchants or through their agents, from shopkeepers, some of whom did a good bit of gombeening, and from an utterly stupid and venal section of the Press. There were also the coopers, whose occupation of making butter firkins would be gone if creameries were introduced. Once I had to escape by stealth from Miltown Malbay, where these craftsmen had whetted their "drawing-knives", to "cut the 'livers' out of me"—as was luridly and emphatically conveyed to me by a nervous young member of the R.I.C. "Agin' thim fellas," he said, "the 'Force' would be powerless to protect ye. They have the whole town filled up with porter, an' they say they'll have your blood; so they will." I had no mind to end my days at Miltown Malbay, and so I hooked it in the guard's van of the West Clare Railway, and was thankful to escape from that place of many brutal murders. The scenes of no less than seven had been pointed out to me that



very morning by my host, from his house, situated appropriately on a rising ground named "Kil-deemon". I hope some power has laid the "Kill Demon" of Miltown Malbay, otherwise a beautiful and restful spot. But the drawing-knife of the cooper is a fell weapon—not much inferior to the Gurkha's kukri.

This was the only threatened attempt on my life that ever I encountered. I can only vouch for its reality by the state of funk that the young constable evinced. He would not even come with me to the train; so I had to lug my bag across several fields to where the lazy little conveyance lay. It may sound all very silly to my readers, but I was unarmed and, therefore, defenceless. The coopers and their following were full of drink; and even the bravest of my readers would feel like the criminal in the *Mikado* when confronted with their bared "snicker snees". Anyway, I was extremely thankful when I gained the hospitable shelter of the County Clare Club at Ennis.

I had yet two other unpleasant experiences in the "Banner County". I was billed to speak at the Court House at Ennistymon, got there at the appointed hour, and found that the chairman, a local magnate, had ratted. There were knots of rather sullen-looking loafers near by. The Petty Sessions Clerk turned up, but looking very white about the gills. "I'm in dread," said he, "you'll have no great meeting here to-day. The coopers are tee-totally agin anny kind of cramery. An' they have the whole town with them. 'Twas a pity you

came here, and this the best butter-market in West Clare." I said that it was because of that fact, and also of an influential invitation, that I had come. To shorten it, there was no meeting. Not one of those miserable funks who had invited me had turned up. When I saw the meeting was going to be a frost, I gathered up my papers and prepared to depart. The Petty Sessions Clerk did not leave his sanctuary to bid me farewell. As I was mounting my car, a well-aimed sod hit me amidships, then there came many more, but they missed. Sods having given out, stones came freely from the groups of anti-co-operators, but my jarvey lashed his old horse and we soon got out of range.

My next fixture was at a place the name of which I have forgotten. It was a meeting in a little disused mill on a small tarn that looked as black as ink. I had to leave my car on the high road and walk down a muddy bohereen to the place of meeting. There I found about a score of men who made no gesture of greeting or welcome such as I usually received. Their appearance was forbidding. The little mill had not been used as such for many years, but had evidently been resorted to as a shelter by weather-driven cattle, for the floor was a mess of filthy mud. There were, here and there, a few stepping-stones, and at the end, where my audience had gathered, there was a relatively elevated spot. I didn't feel a bit happy, but I unfolded my tale about the advantage of co-operative creameries. It fell upon unresponsive ears. As a usual preliminary, I had obtained the names of

those present, given with evident and unusual reluctance. One man would say to another, "Here, write my name down for me". The place had begun to give me the creeps. You see the drawing-knives of the Miltown Malbay coopers were fresh in my memory! At the end of the proceedings, a big and very truculent man asked me what I was going to do for them. Was I going to build the "cramary" and would I work it, and what was I going to get out of it? and so forth. Soothing words availed me very little, arguments none at all. Finally, I was devilishly glad to escape from that foul den with its evil congregation to the high road, where I found my driver on his knees, hat off, praying audibly. We hit the road for Kilfenora, where I dined sumptuously, as did also my poor scared jarvey, thanks to the hospitality of my old friend, Father Crowe. He would listen to nothing until I had refreshed the inner man. Then I disclosed the names of those who had been at my meeting in that ghastly mill. "Thanks be to God, my boy," said he, "that you are alive and well, for every one of those fellows who met you below are murderers, or concerned in murder. Haven't you heard of the murder of Head Constable ——? Well, your chairman is only after being released from penal servitude for it. Glory be to God! But there must be great good in this thing that Horace Plunkett is preaching. Only for it must be good, you'd be at the bottom of the lough below with a couple of stones tied to you."

Father Crowe was a dear old man, a great

Christian and an earnest believer in co-operation. And he was as shrewd as he was kindly, and put me wise about all that queer county of Clare in which you may encounter the brightest and best and also the darkest and worst of mankind. I treasured up Father Crowe's advice. His wisdom was as profound as his knowledge of almost every man in West Clare was complete. He had the record of every one of them stored in the cells of his brain and these records he imparted to me in all their naked truth. Henceforth, I knew where to go and there whom to seek out and what places to shun. So I had no more unpleasant or "regrettable" incidents, though I had some that were amusing.

## CHAPTER II

Dan B——'s "Little Mill"—His Hospitality—  
His Descent from the Emperor Nero—Journeys  
by Jarvey Car

NOT very far from Kilrush stood a small disused mill. Ruins like these were becoming the very bane of my existence; every man who had one on his farm offered it with all the persuasiveness, and more, of the house agent as a most "desirable" site for a "cramery". Invariably, it was found that the stream which provided the mill with water, however, became a mere rivulet in the height of the milk season, when the maximum of power was required. Even when this claim had been exploded, it was argued that the site of the mill provided a building (of sorts), and an easy means of disposing of the offensive effluent; also that the mill had been placed in its position originally because it was the "centre of the naatural fall of the country"; in other words, that several roads converged there.

But to return to my mill. Accompanied by a genial and convivial Scottish acquaintance, I addressed a meeting near the spot. I expounded all the arguments for co-operation—and it was truly a good dairying centre—and got a very cordial reception. A resolution was unanimously adopted to establish a co-operative creamery and to appoint a

committee to arrange about the site and other matters. An informal meeting of this committee was held at which the chief business transacted was the consideration of a wholly (by me, at all events) unexpected invitation from the chairman, on whose land the derelict mill stood, for the committee, the speaker and friend to dine with him. The invitation was given with such cordiality that to refuse would have been churlish. Moreover, square meals in those early organising days, when my digestion was unimpaired, were rare and generally welcome. So about a score of us trooped off to Mr. Dan B——'s big farm-house. Without any delay, we were all ushered into his parlour, on the table of which was displayed a gargantuan feast. There was a large home-cured ham, a pair of geese, a pair of ducks, two legs of mutton (one boiled, one roast), some chickens, dishes of cabbage and potatoes—enough for the hungriest platoon of Tommies that ever escaped alive and unhurt from the trenches in the Great War. Our host motioned me to the seat at the head of the table. I naturally demurred, but he insisted and so I had to acquiesce. I found myself confronted with the gigantic ham, flanked by the brace of geese, whose stripped legs and wings were stretched out appealingly to heaven, unrestrained by skewer or string. An enormous carving-knife was placed in my hand and I was encouraged by my host to carve "all I could reach to". The knife wouldn't cut, and I had to convey this fact to my host. He got in a scythe stone and put a saw edge on the weapon. And so I carved those two

geese, likewise the huge ham. I found I was not then done with my labours, for every guest desired to have a slice of the mutton, or a bit of a fowl, or both, on his plate. My host said I was the finest carver he ever saw; so the legs of mutton and the fowls were brought to me to be carved and dismembered. I doubt if any diner ever had to work harder for his meal than I did on that occasion.

Heavens! the waste at that entertainment. Everyone had a stack of solid meat on his plate, but not one-fourth of it was eaten. The rest was left. One of the legs of mutton would have amply sufficed. But that was not Mr. Dan B——'s idea of hospitality—*also*, he wanted to sell the site of his derelict "little mill".

Nothing was drunk during the consumption of the solids, and I was longing for a drink. Then said our host to his wife, who, with her two buxom daughters, had waited on us all the time: "Bridget, bring in that gallon of whiskey, the half-stone of lump sugar, the tumblers *and* . . . be *continually* bringing hot water!"

So we sat down at four in the afternoon to drink punch. The whiskey was good—I saw the jar—it came from John Quinn's cellars. My Scottish friend had a head of reinforced concrete and mine wasn't exactly tender. Then our host began to tell us the most outlandish stories. Most of them I have forgotten, but he took my breath away by suddenly saying to me, "Mr. Anderson, me honoured guest, I'd like you to know that I am very nearly related to the Emperor Nairo. Now, don't be too quick to

smile at that statement. I'll make it quite clear to you. Th' Imperor Nairo, be all accounts, was a bit of a playboy. He was the divil entirely with the girls, and could drink the say dry. Annyway, he got what the doctors called the hobnail liver and he was that bloody sick that he lost his taste for all his amusements. He had nearly given up intirely, an' wasn't there a wee gorsoon in his palace, away in Rome, a little slave from Clare! An' whin he saw th' Imperor was gettin' dam near his ind, he begs lave to say a word to him. I suppose they thought it might be as good to give him his chance. Annyway, the bouchaleen kem in to th' Imperor, an' he as sick as a cat, an' the little lad says to him, 'I beg your honour's pardon, Imperor', says he, 'but they tell me ye aren't too well in yourself, these times, an' that it is your stomach an' your liver that do be ann'ying you. Tell me, did ye ever hear of County Clare?' Th' Imperor looked at him, an' a sick look it was. 'I did *not*, thin', said he. 'An' where is it, an' what about it, an' why the divil do you be presumin' to ann'y me an' I very sick?' 'Plase, Imperor', said the bouchaleen, 'I'm a Clare b'y. An' ther's an island—they call it "Mutton Island"—near Kilkee, where people do be goin' for cures for disayses like your own, an' they come away from it as strong as bulls.' 'Take me to "Mutton Island" this instant minute', says Nairo, says he. 'I beg your pardon, Imperor', says the lad, 'when you are cured maybe you'll set me free?' 'Indeed an' I will', says Nairo, says he, 'but I warn ye that if it doesn't cure me you'll be drowned in the tide.' 'All right, sir', says the



bouchaleen. Well, to make a long story short, Nairo kem to 'Mutton Island' and he built himself a grand lodge on it, and he ate the Carrigeen moss and drank the plain say water until he had his disased ould inside purified like it had never been. An' when he got well he took a likin' to the whiskey an' the salty mutton an' also to the Clare girls. He left the little boy go back to his people with enough money to buy out their farm. These Imperors had some kind of a plan for marryin'—quite regular accordin' to the laws of those days—as many wives as they cared for or could keep. An' didn't Nairo spot a very likely girl of the B——'s an' didn't he marry her! And here am I, now, a workin' farmer and a proud descendant from that illustrious (but some people say, infamous) Imperor!"

Dear readers, this tale is almost word for word as I heard it from the mouth of Mr. Dan B——. And not one of his neighbours ever even chuckled at its manifest absurdity. They had probably heard it before.

As I was coming away that night, Mr. Dan whispered to me softly, "Of course, it is all right now about the little mill". It was not a question, but an assertion. I then realised, though not before, the object of this *gaudeamus*. Dan's "little mill" still lies derelict; but the memory of his descent from Nero will never leave me, nor the manner of its telling, nor the surroundings. "Bridget . . . be *continually* bringing in hot water!" What a wealth of unrestrained hospitality lies behind that marital command!

I heard afterwards that Dan was about the primest of all the prime boys in West Clare. I can well believe it. But he was a very agreeable fellow, with a grand sense of humour, and, though he failed to sell his "little mill", I don't think he ever bore me the slightest ill-will for having failed to rise to his fly.

I hope my readers won't imagine that the daily life of a co-operative organiser was filled with such picturesque entertainments. It was generally pretty strenuous. One had to rise early and work late, if serious in trying to bring unbelieving and tight-fisted farmers into the co-operative fold. And on most of such days a man had to traverse many miles of bad road on a jolting side-car, often with a bad horse, and that in all kinds of weather. But there was always a laugh to be got out of it. The quaintness of the local histories, as told by my drivers, would fill a library and provide a plenitude of mirth. These yarns were always delivered without any conscious effort on the part of the teller to cause a laugh. They were always spontaneous and generally worth listening to. But, if one had to get to one's destination at a given time, it was a mistake to give the jarvey too much rope. Once he thought he had got hold of some credulous "fella from Dublin", he would start on some amazing tale, which began in space and could only end there. He would ("be your lave, sir") "redden the pipe", and between sucks at it he would slither out impossible yarns about quite equally impossible places and people. Meanwhile, the reins would flop on the old

plug's back, the whip would be idle and the only part of the machine running at full speed would be the tongue of the narrator. This was all very well when there was time to spare, when the weather was nice and the country spread its manifold loveliness all round. Then, one could fill one's favourite pipe and smoke luxuriously, almost regardless of the fact that the bacon and eggs of the morning were things of a six or seven hour past and that the next meal was problematical. And, as one lobbed along, a pub. would now and then loom up. The old plugs knew these "rest houses" and, as they approached them, they used to prick their flopping ears and steady themselves for the usual halt.

I'd say, "Well, Mick, what about a pint?" "Begob, sir, I wouldn't say agin it, an' th'ould harrse 'ud be the betther of a dhrink. He's afther doin' twinty mile of a dam' bad road, bad luck to thim County Surveyors and the thieves of con-thractors that has the people robbed, an' our cars med kinsther of, and he'd hardly hould out to Ennis." So we'd call a halt. Mick would always attend to "th'ould harrse" first and get him a bucket of flour and water. I usually found a reasonably good bottle of Bass in these pubs. Guinness had not then the wide or deserved vogue that it now enjoys and the local brew was far from being appetising or healthful. Mick's manners were always good. He never presumed to quaff his pint cheek by jowl with me. He always retired to a respectful distance and swigged it there while I swigged my Bass. These little extravagances had to

be met out of my private purse—none too fat—for my allowance for expenses was fixed at a rate that allowed for no extras; indeed, it never sufficed to meet my actual outgoings. Later on, I possessed myself of a push bicycle and on it made many long and weary journeys. It was a “Premier Roadster”, with solid tyres, and a more infernal mount I have never had. It took charge of me once on a steep hill, when I was tired out, and ran away with me. The rotten brake would not act. I came a horrid crumpler but in soft, muddy earth by the roadside; I think it all but knocked me out for a bit. But I had still miles to pedal to my place of meeting, at Feenagh, in County Limerick. I got there on time, but rather breathless and covered with mud; had quite a good meeting, and started the Feenagh Creamery, which still lives and flourishes.

Then I had to get back to Mallow, where I lived, *via* Charleville. I remember getting to Newtown Shandrum, where I felt too tired to go any further. I had some mulled porter and sat by the fire in a pub. I was wet to the skin, for it had rained heavily. I fell asleep and remained there for an hour or more and then remembered that I had only the last train to catch at Charleville. I was stiff and shaky, but I trundled over the vile road and caught my train. I was no good for anything next day and stayed in bed. I could relate scores of such experiences, not out of bravado, but just to show our present-day organisers, who travel by motor in luxury, that those who ploughed the lea for them had to bite pretty hard on the bullet at times. I

suppose I was one of a tougher breed than they, otherwise I should not be alive to write these reminiscences to-day.

Let me just recall one month of thirty-one days. In that month I slept in thirty different places, sometimes on the seat of a night train, with no covering other than my frieze overcoat and no pillow other than my wallet of papers. And, do I regret one hour of it? Not I.

There were endless disappointments, but still the successes began to multiply. And my faith was firmly pinned to Plunkett. I just knew he was bound to come out on top. Moreover, I realised that I had burnt my boats; I had abandoned the life of comparative ease and dearly loved sport for advocacy of an unpopular cause. I knew there could be no going back, nor do I think I ever looked back after I had grasped the handles of the co-operative plough. I became almost fanatical about my work, and, but for my marvellously good constitution, I should probably have had a miserable break-down.

## CHAPTER III

Plunkett attends Meetings—An unfortunate  
Metaphor—More Journeyings—I take ill

Now and then Plunkett joined me in expeditions and always met with good receptions. The farmers had learned that he was out to befriend not to befool them. He had gone over my record of work and seemed pleased with it, though, wisely, he was never lavish with praise. If he said a thing I had done was “good”, I was highly elated. I have often thought that he would have made a great General—his plans were so well and carefully laid. All the numerous pitfalls and dangers had been foreseen and pointed out to me. My job was to jump these obstacles. My eyes had been too near the trees to see the woods. He saw both.

We had one very disappointing but highly entertaining meeting at Monemohill, a lonely spot in West County Limerick, the centre of which was a small National School surrounded by a four-foot wall. The farmers had said they wanted a creamery and a meeting was arranged at the school-house. We arrived punctually, in torrents of pitiless rain. We were met by the schoolmaster and the R.I.C. sergeant. It was in holiday time and the school was cold, mouldy, damp and horribly smelly. Turf was

produced, but it was so wet that it would only smoulder and produce suffocating clouds of smoke from which we were glad to escape to the lee-side of the building. One by one, half a dozen or more drenched farmers rolled in. The rain swept in its best Limerick fashion in a grey cloud across the fields. Suddenly there was an exclamation from one of the drenched ones. "Begob, that's John Madigan, an' he ridin' here acrost the country." Out of the mirk we saw a man on horseback riding at the school as straight as an arrow from the bow. We watched him breathlessly, for he rode well though now and then he seemed to lurch in the saddle, but the nose of his horse pointed unswervingly to the school. Into the last field he came, kicking the youngster on with his spurless heels and cramming his caubeen on his head. He put the colt at the four-foot wall and, *mirabile dictu*, he cleared it and floundered into the school enclosure with all four feet wide apart. It was magnificent. This John Madigan was a veritable centaur, for he seemed to be part and parcel of his horse. He threw himself out of the saddle and whipped off his hat. "Master", said he to the teacher, "to which of these two strange gentlemen have I the great honour and privilege of being first presented, and, at the same time, to make my humble apologies for having been some minutes behind the appointed time. But, God's will be done, and poor John Curtin's wife, God rest her soul, had to be interred in the presence of her neighbours. That little act of friendship and respect must, gentlemen, be my excuse." Intro-

duced to Plunkett, John Madigan made a flowery speech and a modified one to me. He was full of an old-world courtesy, fine speech and bad whiskey, but he was a fine old gentleman, if ever there was one. I knew enough about riding across country to realise what it must have meant in the way of nerve, after a two-mile point-to-point over a heavy country, to put a raw three-year-old at a four-foot rubble wall—none of your “stone-gaps”, which fall at a touch.

John Madigan was one of a type that I think has now become extinct, though a few remained in those days. He stood fully six foot two in height, he was as straight and slim as a lance, his features were fine, his eyes, sometimes piercing like a hawk's, smiled on one too; he wore his grey hair rather long and with it the not unbecoming side-whiskers of our forefathers. Instead of any sort of overcoat, he wore a cape which flapped behind him like the wings of a bird as he took his fences, calmly and with judgment, in crossing the country on his three-year-old.

Really, there was no meeting. But very soon Plunkett and John Madigan were discussing horses and hunting. When John discovered that Plunkett hunted regularly with the Meath Hounds, he hailed him in God's name. “Here”, said he, “have we with us the scion of an ancient family long identified with the misfortunes of our poor and down-trodden country. He has done us a signal honour, an honour I may observe” (looking contemptuously at the small group of drenched farmers) “which has not



been duly appreciated by the people of this place. God is very good and wise" (he continued) "but I must confess that I had hoped to have been pointed out by this Honourable gentleman a more attractive road to prosperity than the creamery, good and all as it may be. We are a fighting race, Honoured Sir, and we are always prepared to lay down our lives for freedom. But if the Almighty has decreed that our freedom should be won by such peaceful means as those which you advocate, then, Sir, this people, on the word of John Madigan, the humble speaker, are with you, heart and soul. Three cheers for the Honourable Horace Plunkett!"

And Horace Plunkett had not uttered a word about creameries! But John had evidently been reading the papers.

Nothing resulted from this meeting, nor from scores of such meetings. But the Apostle of Co-operation held on. His faith was so strong in him that he could afford to wait for the success which, even then, he was convinced would crown his efforts. He always said he was content to leave his work to the justification of time.

Plunkett was always painstaking and made his stock speech at every meeting, however small. I thought it a great waste of energy and told him so; but I made no impression. Then, not realising the matter-of-factness of the southern farmer, he introduced a metaphor of his own manufacture, and not a particularly happy one. Dealing with the position of the dairy farmer who had abandoned home butter-making and had betaken himself to a pro-

prietary creamery, he described the position of such a one as having "kicked his churn into the ditch" and as being, therefore, helpless. When this strange proceeding, with all its grotesque improbabilities, was first spoken of by Plunkett, I, whose duty it was to watch the attitude of the audience, saw, with dismay, curious looks exchanged, a nudge of the elbow, and heard an ill-restrained guffaw. But he seemed immensely pleased with his idea. That meeting was barren of result. At our next meeting the unhappy churn was again trotted out, to be treated with cold silence. The audience dispersed without even passing the usual vote of thanks. Yet once more was this miserable and fantastic churn "kicked into the ditch". This time it provoked unrestrained derision. "Yerra, what the divil is the man talkin' about? Kickin' a churn into the ditch! What sort of talk is that?" And before he had nearly finished his usual speech, the meeting had resolved itself into little groups, gradually edging away towards the door. It, too, proved a frost. As we drove back to our inn he seemed, for the first time, depressed and disappointed with the intelligence and receptiveness of his audiences. I had not the heart to open fire on him across the well of the rocking jaunting-car. But I hardened my heart that evening and told him his churn-kicking parable would have to be scrapped. Just at first he was almost indignant. "Don't you see", said he, "that it is purely metaphor?" I replied that of course *I* could see it, but, frankly I didn't think much of it. Then I explained that nobody

“speaking Englified”, as he did, was ever well advised to try either metaphor or joke on the matter-of-fact farmer. And I had to make it clear to him that the impression he had made with his churn, if indeed it had made any, was to belittle his own intelligence in their eyes and to convey the idea that he was making fun of them. It took me quite a time to convince him, but the churn was never afterwards kicked into the ditch.

Try to realise the difficulties that Horace Plunkett laboured under in those early days. They were almost insuperable. His audiences were composed of suspicious, needy farmers, fooled many times by specious charlatans, depressed by bad times, endless hardships, often rack-rented. And, almost to a man, they were Roman Catholic; they expressed hatred and distrust of England, they hated the landlords much and the land agents even more. If they tolerated a Protestant neighbour, it was because he lived among them and they knew all about him and because his life was little better than the hard, dreary one they themselves had to live. Then this extraordinary product of Eton, Oxford and ten years out on the foothills of the Rocky Mountains descended upon them to break the spell of their apathy. He spoke like an Englishman, as, in truth, he was in everything but his great heart, which was Irish, through and through. His love for Ireland was abiding and boundless. It must have been that, together with his transparent honesty, that ultimately won the farmers to him. His programme offered no prizes. It called for self-

sacrifice, for unselfishness, for public spirit, for mutual toleration. He had never the power, even if he had had the will, to set a crowd cheering madly, but he did possess the power to attract to him all that was best in the audiences to which he spoke, and to retain the loyalty of a faithful few all the days of his life.

Gradually, his attendances at country meetings became fewer, for he was aiming at a parliamentary career and also at the foundation of a body which he had designed should carry on the work of organisation throughout the thirty-two counties. For the movement had begun to grow apace and I could hardly keep up with the demands on my services. Our co-operative organisers of present days have a soft job compared with those of the pioneers. The most luxurious of our conveyances was a hack-car with, perchance, a good horse. All the roads were vile and usually the weather matched the roads. I can recall one experience. I had driven round all West Clare and had spoken at four meetings. I had to get a change of horses at Kilrush. I had begun at Miltown Malbay. Leaving there in a blinding storm of sleety rain, I preached the gospel at Doonaha, at Doonbeg, at Labasheeda and, finally, at Kildysart. I was dead beat. I had been at the job since early morning. My objective was Ennis, where I had been promised comfortable quarters at the County Clare Club. I was falling asleep; so I got hold of the driver's dicky and slumbered on the car. I dare say I half woke up now and then, but the old plug was still plodding along

and Ennis was not yet. When I got there I was dead asleep, with my half-frozen hand clutching the dickey. I remember how difficult it was to disengage it, for it was perfectly numb. It was then, I suppose, nearly 9 o'clock, but the County Clare Club rose to a great and noble height, for, while you could be looking about you, I had been served with a delicious grill. I had seen to it that my jarvey was not uncared for; one never neglected one's drivers. Very soon I had forgotten the discomforts of the sixteen-hour day with its four meetings, all more or less abortive.

These little County Clubs were veritable havens of refuge for the weary, provided he had the open sesame. And so in Tralee, Limerick, Ennis and Nenagh, I was accorded the freedom of the city and a comfortable bed. But never a gate-crasher crossed the portals of these very exclusive establishments. One had to come duly accredited, or not at all. All of them were snug and comfortable sanctuaries, where old gentlemen drank punch in winter evenings and talked of the good old days. All of them seemed to have lived in a Golden Age. The old boys were mildly and courteously curious about my job. I didn't appear to be a commercial traveller, but what the devil was I doing? Was I stirring up any kind of a political revolution? I tried to explain my mission to some of these old gentlemen but failed. Each and every one of them would hospitably invite me to have a drink. So I drank their drinks and retained their friendship. I found it absolutely impossible to convey to them

all that Horace Plunkett's work might mean to them if it were to succeed. True, this was delicate ground and I had to tread warily, for while co-operation was designed to give additional profit to the farmer, it was *not* designed to enrich the landowner, apart from the fact that it would improve the condition of his tenants and, therefore, make it easier for them to keep their rent engagements. The Irish Land Commission had laid it down that a co-operative creamery was a "tenant's improvement" and therefore afforded no justification for an increase in rent. These old men had heard of Plunkett and knew who he was. They used to ask me, "Wasn't he at Oxford?" When I assented, they always assured me that the most black and vile heresies emanated from Oxford. One said to me: "It's a pity Mr. Plunkett was an Oxford man. Tom —, my neighbour, sent his boy there—a clever young fellow—and back he comes, an out-and-out Socialist. I believe he even wears a red tie!"

Then we arrived at a time when the movement could not be carried on without more funds than those at our disposal. My little office in my house at Mallow, where I then lived (having resigned my agency and my Petty Sessions Clerkship), was inundated with letters. I had no typewriter, no assistance, and one day, between morn and night, I despatched eighty letters, written by myself. That couldn't go on. I was pretty tough, but I was beginning to feel worn out. This was at the end of 1893. Then I fell ill with typhoid fever, contracted, I think, in London but developing on a tour in

County Donegal with Plunkett and the late Cardinal O'Donnell, both members of the recently created Congested Districts Board. I felt seedy at starting but stuck out three or four meetings. I shall never forget the last one, though I have forgotten the name of the place. It was held in a barn, and we, the speakers, were placed up above the audience. I am sure there were at least 300 people at it. My head was splitting. I had alternate hot and cold shudders. But there was some devil in me. When my turn came to speak, I have not the least idea what I said or how I said it; all I remember was the bobbing sea of heads below, like a field of animated turnips, while I yowled at them the doctrine of Plunkett. When I sat down, or collapsed, unaccustomed cheers were ringing in my ears. Dr. O'Donnell said, "You spoke very well". Plunkett put his hand on my shoulder and said, "That was the very best speech you ever made. It was simply splendid." I was longing to be in bed. But we had many miles to drive to Stranorlar, where we had been invited to dine by Monsignor —, the P.P. I was in a raging fever. The dinner was a nightmare. I remember nothing except that I could not eat but was consumed with a mad thirst. I drank champagne and whiskey, enough to put any three men under the table. Then I had to face a drive to Donegal on an outside car, where I put up at Mr. Timoney's Hotel. The night was a hell. Towards morning the fever had abated somewhat and I remembered that I had with me some antipyrine — a very dangerous, but most effective drug. I

staggered out of bed and took twenty grains—a big dose. Dr. Warnock, a very clever and kindly man, came to see me early in the morning. I was then in a state of semi-collapse from the effects of the drug. He diagnosed my ailment as typhoid and came again in the afternoon, when my temperature had risen to boiling-point. He told me what I was in for. I had enough wit about me to say that I didn't want to die in Donegal town, that I preferred Dublin. He replied that I'd have to stay where I was. Then I remembered that I had thirty more grains of the antipyrine left, and I besought him to let me leave in the morning if my temperature was normal. To my surprise, he readily agreed, for of course he thought I'd be in a high fever next day. When all was quiet that night, I got out of bed and swallowed the remaining thirty grains and washed the dose down with the remains of my flask. He came early and found me cold and almost pulseless. My temperature was subnormal. He protested that it was suicidal, but I held him to his promise and departed on a seven-hour rail journey to Dublin. There, in a nursing home, I hovered for ten weeks, between life and death, with little but the strong desire to live to sustain me.

When I was dressed, in a very heavy suit, with a pair of shooting-boots, I was weighed and failed to bring down the scales at eight stone!

It was the skill of Dr. John William Moore (now Sir John William Moore) and my two splendid nurses that brought me through. And the kindness of Plunkett and Dr. O'Donnell was unremitting



and will never be forgotten. One day, when I felt I was very near the edge of things, Plunkett came to me. I said I wasn't so much afraid of dying, for, in sooth, I was tired of the struggle, but I was thinking what would happen to my children. He replied very gently, "I have thought about them. Don't let that worry you." That was over forty years ago.

This unfortunate illness of mine came at a most inopportune time, for Plunkett was then busy planning for the establishment of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, a body which was to inaugurate, as it did, a new era for Irish Agriculture, and he needed my assistance. I got well as quick as I could and gave him all the help I could. But, ultimately, he launched his scheme, unaided by anybody, entirely thought out and planned by himself. Its amazing success is an eternal memorial to its founder. For, in truth, it had a wonderful success. And I believe that if he had never forsaken it for parliamentary life and an official career, both of which he deemed necessary for the completion of his schemes, it would be to-day the dominant factor in our distracted national life.

Thus ended this episode of my life when I was virtually a free-lance. It was on the whole a happy and adventurous time, never trammelled with red tape, for I had complete liberty of action. Looking back on it all now, I think I achieved a certain measure of success. I had, in the early days, almost unaided, broken enough virgin soil to encourage Plunkett to go forward with his project, which was

to concentrate all the energy and thought of the best Irishmen of the day in a concerted effort to complete the work which he had begun. I felt that I had found my "job" and had established myself in it. The future was full of marvellous possibilities. The pleasant past might be regretfully parted with. But I had enjoyed it—to the full—while it lasted.

## CHAPTER IV

I visit Sweden and lose my "Breeks"

WHILE I was still a free-lance, before the starting of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, owing allegiance to nobody but Horace Plunkett, it was decided that we ought to obtain some information about the rapid extension of co-operative creameries in Scandinavia. And so, accredited by letters from the Duchess of Hamilton to her relative, Mr. James Dickson, of Gothenburg, I visited Sweden and spent the best part of six weeks in the dairying districts, visiting scores of creameries and collecting much useful information. The language presented no difficulty, for there was always someone at hand who spoke English fluently. I found they were far ahead of us in dairying technique. Every farmer whose land was at all extensive had had a first-class education in business methods, in science and in his particular industry. Practically every house had its telephone—and, remember, this was more than forty years ago. The service was admirable and cheap. Many large farmers took in apprentices to whom they taught the why and wherefore of everything in the farming line. These young men were treated as members of the family, but they had to work hard. The Swedes had realised

the necessity for improving the milk yield of their cows—mainly the Danish Red and the Ayrshire. Cow testing was the rule, not, as here, the exception. Their average milk yield would be close on 600 gallons, 33 per cent more than ours. I saw nothing but poor land, but I saw no starved cows. The byres were always scrupulously clean and the pedigree of every cow and the milk records of herself and her forbears were displayed over her particular stall, into which she walked unerringly when milking time came. The cleanliness of the creameries and of their workers as compared with ours filled me with shame. And, almost always, some attempt had been made to render the exterior of the creamery attractive. The surroundings were always neat and tidy, and often planted with roses and other flowers and pretty flowering shrubs. Rule of thumb in the process of manufacture had been abolished and scientific methods substituted, all carried out with meticulous exactitude. Clogs were universally worn alike by male and female workers. Our Irish creamery hands were too proud to wear such things! They appeared to prefer the wearing of sodden leather boots and contracting rheumatism in consequence.

Let me give an idea of the extent to which the Swedish farmers were educated. Driving to a creamery some distance away, my driver indicated to me that he had lost his way. The road ran through a farm the only boundaries of which were a mild sort of "snake fence" at each side. I espied a man ploughing some way off and went to speak to him.

Alas! I knew no Swedish and I did not expect him to know English. To my intense surprise, he replied to me, quite readily, in perfect English and gave me the information I needed. I ventured to apologise for my ignorance of his language and to congratulate him on his fluency. I asked him how he came to speak English so perfectly. He replied simply, "Our commerce is mainly with your country. Therefore are we enjoined at our High Schools to perfect ourselves in the language of the people who take from us the bulk of our produce. There is no necessity for *you* to learn *our* language. It is *our* duty to study *yours*." The Swedish language was preserved, all the ancient customs were preserved, the beautifully ornamented, yet simple, national dresses, especially those of the Dalecarlian peasants, were preserved—everything worth preserving in the national life was held sacrosanct. But they were always adding to this cherished ancient store. They added education, refinement, cleanliness, beauty, courtesy and, I think I can say without much fear of contradiction, the greatest degree of agricultural efficiency which has been attained by any people except, perhaps, their neighbours, the Finns. I have been told that the Swedes are an intemperate and an immoral people. I can only tell what I saw and did not see. I never saw a man under the influence of drink in public, nor did I ever see a prostitute on the streets.

I had arrived in Gothenburg just at the opening of the Great Exhibition, which is, or was, held every five years in four different cities. On presenting my

credentials at the Grand Hotel Haglünd, I was told that there wasn't a square yard of accommodation. The hall porter was a Russian and I think knew everything that could have been said at the building of Babel. He said the night porter—a German (he uttered this in disgust)—might be able to put me up, and also a pleasant travelling companion I had met on the Wilson liner from Hull. So we went where we were directed to go and ascended to the top of a high building. The German was just about to go out to his duties at the hotel, but he gave his orders to his frau and she and her numerous offspring disappeared somewhere. Then she returned and showed us our sleeping-quarters, two boxes, something like old-fashioned settle beds. She put clean sheets on them and they looked all right. So we turned in. Before long, things began to move! My fellow-traveller held his peace as long as he could. Then I heard an ejaculation—"Lord, this is *awful!*" "Have you many?" I asked. "Millions", he replied, "and they can't have been fed for a month." It was a loathsome night. We both got up, lit our pipes, finished the remains of my flask and longed for morning. Between five and six we turned out in our pyjamas and slippers with overcoats and made a bee-line for a public bath-house in a workman's tramcar. The bath-house was spotless. We took our tickets for a hot bath and a cold plunge and betook ourselves to our cubicles where we stripped in feverish haste. At that moment, a big bony woman of fifty or so, with sleeves tucked up to the shoulders, a huge lump of soap and a

scrubbing-brush, confronted me "mid nodings on". I bade her begone, to Tophit, or anywhere else she pleased. All she did was to smile, grip me by the back of the neck and hurl me deftly into my tub. "Scrub, scrub" was all she could say in English. And, as the Lord liveth, she *scrubbed*! Resistance, I found, was useless, for this old washerwoman was stronger than I was and had all kinds of jiu-jitsu tricks for subduing reluctant ablutioners. Simultaneously with my visitation, I heard yells and imprecations from my fellow-traveller. We yelled our several experiences to each other. Finally, my washerwoman allowed me to emerge, as red as a lobster, and smelling like a soap factory. She took me by the now limp arm and led me to the cold plunge. There she hit me a good sound slap on my hind quarters that sent me hurtling into the cold swimming-bath. I dived and collided with Weldon, my fellow-passenger. Then we related our experiences and had a hearty laugh over them. The cold water was delicious and we revelled in it. Finally, we betook ourselves to our respective cubicles. No sooner had I come into mine than the grinning old Amazon entered with an enormous towel, hot from the radiators. "Rub down", said she. "Ja, so." And I was enveloped in the hot bath sheet and "rubbed down" in a way that was a revelation. Again, resistance was useless; so I tamely submitted, feeling all my manly pride had gone out of me. But, I never had a better wash. I forgot the myriads of fleas—thank goodness they were *only* fleas—of overnight. Going away, we

dowered our respective dames with a kröner apiece, at which they clicked their clogged heels and bowed, from the neck up, smiling prodigiously and gratefully.

Years afterwards, when I met pompous people, full of themselves and their fancied importance, I recalled that Gothenburg bath-house and wished that the pompous idiots were in it, to go through the ritual into which Weldon and I had been initiated. It would have washed the starch out of them!

By the favour of Mr. James Dickson, who was a great man in Gothenburg, and his kinsman, Count Oscar Dickson, I was invited to a great banquet given to King Oscar. This function took place at three in the afternoon of a stiflingly hot day. To turn out in full evening dress, white tie and white waistcoat at that hour was a new experience to me. But I had never dined at a king's banquet and I was as keen as mustard on it. So I walked out of the Grand Hotel in all my best evening togs into the blazing sunshine. It was too hot for the lightest of overcoats. I looked as if I had been a waiter at the hotel who had been kicked out for some misdemeanour, but nobody took the least notice of me. The dining-room was filled with guests, among them a large number of Army officers in gorgeous uniforms. They were all blond, handsome fellows. But whether it was their tailors or their boot-makers, it always seemed to me that their legs were misfits. Not one of them had the smart and shapely limbs of a British officer, clad in overalls. But, they



were genial and kindly and all could speak some, and many much English. Mr. Dickson sought me out and presented me to King Oscar, a bearded handsome man with a keen but friendly eye and a pleasant smile. He had heard of Horace Plunkett, and was interested. A young A.D.C. acted as interpreter when necessary. Then the King said something to the A.D.C. and the latter produced a big cigar from a case and, bowing, handed it to me, saying, "His Majesty hopes you will give him the pleasure of smoking this after dinner". It was a graceful act towards a stranger. But King Oscar was a kindly man. His one pet aversion was Norway, then joined to Sweden. Whenever he went to Christiania (now Oslo) in his yacht, the Norwegian papers, always hostile to Sweden, were by his orders, collected and burned.

And so this dinner began. I sat between two Cavalry officers, one could speak but little English, the other a little more. Of course we had previously partaken of the *smör goose bord*, which comprised Halmstad lax—thin slices of raw, smoked salmon (most excellent), anchovies in barrels, junks of raw herring with onions (I never touched that delicacy), caviare, thin bannocks of rye meal and nips of Swedish brandy, a white liqueur immensely strong and highly flavoured with carraway seeds, in fact a sort of kummel. There was also a cheese resembling Gruyère, inasmuch as it was full of large and small holes. But it was also stuck full of carraway seeds. After this preliminary had been partaken of, all, even the King, standing at the buffet, we sat

down. We began with champagne. To my disgust it was so sweet as to be almost nauseating, and I began to long for a whiskey and soda. Then one of my soldier friends spotted my almost untouched glass. This fine fellow had been in London. To the wine waiter, a functionary wearing a sort of Lord Mayor's chain, he said, "Sst! 'Dry England.' " And behold, the grave wearer of the chain immediately produced a bottle of G. H. Mumm, of priceless vintage. That bottle was as dry as its delightful contents at the end of the feast! Towards the end of the dinner toasts were drunk and speeches made. Of course King Oscar's health came first. A military band, very brassy, played in the gallery at intervals. Each toast was greeted with the German "Hoch! hoch!" My neighbours toasted me over and over again, and my country, but instead of "Hoch, hoch" it was the more homely and friendly "Skald" (pronounced "Skoll"). When the banquet was over, the King came among the guests again. He recognised me and said he hoped I had enjoyed myself and that I would have a pleasant time in his country. And so, with a smile and a bow, he passed on to the next. It must then have been about six, and my two military friends insisted that I should go with them to Belle Vue, a park in which *cafés chantants*, and all manner of amusements, innocent and otherwise, were purveyed. So we went there in a carriage. Immediately on my arrival, I was surrounded by a number of young men immaculately attired (in evening dress, in most cases); they were Swedes, Danes, Germans and Finns. I liked the

Swedes and Finns best. I was introduced as a "distinguished" (save the mark) Irish visitor and immediately I was greeted with cries of "Parnell", "Dillon" and "O'Brien". Everybody presented me with his card, on which was printed the word *agronom*. So I learned that my new friends were farmers, many of them large landowners, who had come to the Exhibition to study any new inventions which related to their industry. I had many very genuinely meant invitations to visit Finland, where I was offered fishing and partridge shooting, and other delights.

We watched a fantastic and none too edifying show at a *café chantant*. Swedish punch and seltzer were brought. The former is a diabolical mixture of enormous strength, held together by sugar. A little of this brew is poured into a sherry glass and swallowed, then, as soon as may be, and the sooner the better to my thinking, the imbibor swallows half a tumbler of seltzer water. I was to have a practical illustration of the necessity for this invariable sequence. In his hospitable zeal to minister to my supposed wants, a young Finnish *agronom* spilt a big spoonful of the "punch" over my best dress bags. As I said, it was very hot, and in a few moments the infernal stuff had crystallised on my legs in a hideous white stain. "Mille pardons", said the ready Finn, and deliberately poured a whole bottle of seltzer water over my outraged legs. I was on the point of smiting him but was gravely restrained. Then the zealous one explained to me that, by his timely first-aid, he had saved my

precious garment from damage and certainly, no stain remained. I reflected that if it were necessary to quench the fire kindled by Swedish punch with buckets of seltzer water, it were better to give it a wide berth. Having spotted a sky-sign—a somewhat rare thing in those days—advertising Power's Whiskey, I pointed it out to my friends and suggested it as a pleasant alternative to their native poison. A bottle was procured and yet another. I had now the means of slaking the intolerable thirst created by the "punch" and drank my well-diluted Power with great satisfaction. But the effect on my friends was devastating; one by one they grew silent and then absolutely wilted, as flowers on their stalks in a scorching sun. I don't think bottle No. 2 of Power was ever finished though there must have been a round dozen of us. When I saw that a strange lack of interest in the proceedings had fallen on our hitherto most cheerful party, so much so that a freshly lighted cigarette would be puffed feebly but once or twice, I thought I'd fade away while the going was good. So I faded back to the Grand Hotel. There, for some reason or other, that great linguist, the Russian hall porter, had not left. To him, with whom I had struck up a great friendship, I related the proceedings of the afternoon and the evening. He heard my tale, with a grave smile now and then. "Ah, Meester Anderson", he said, "you must have heard that the native of a country, he do well to drink his native drink and he do ill to drink all others. So! You drink Dry England at the King's banquet and you will

do well with your stomach. So! And again you, as they say, 'spot' the w'isky of Power. Good! *Very* good! And you drink him, and he do you no harm, for it was your drink from childhood. So! But these others: they knew it not. So it made for what in France they call *bouleversement*. At what hour, Meester Anderson, do you desire your *thé anglais*?"

Before leaving the hospitable shores of Sweden, where I had accumulated a store of information of the greatest value to Ireland, I desired to visit the Falls of Trollhattan, where Lake Wener tumbles into the Gotha Canal. There were many electrical power-houses on these falls, from which not only light but power was then distributed all over Sweden, even as far as Stockholm. Trollhattan Falls were less than fifty miles distant from Gothenburg. Thither I repaired by train one desperately hot afternoon, clad in a thin flannel coat and trousers, a thin shirt and nothing else. I saw how on every islet on the rapids a power-house had been precariously perched. I saw the stupendous locks, where steamers were slowly raised from the canal to the level of the lake. It was all immense. But it seemed to me that the whole scheme of harnessing these falls needed co-ordination. I wandered across a narrow bridge into an inviting pine wood at the other side. It was hot, drowsy and intensely peaceful. The only sound was the roar of the rushing waters. In the pine wood there were some very inviting-looking brown mounds. "Just the place", said I, to myself, "for a rest and a quiet pipe before train time." The pipe smoked divinely.

I was at peace with all the world. All of a sudden I heard the whistle of a train. Without looking at my watch, I concluded it was my very last train. I sprinted back to the station across the narrow bridge and arrived there to see the train moving out. I jumped into the last carriage. It was empty. The train gathered speed and the country became unfamiliar. Then, to my dismay, I discovered that I had boarded the wrong train and was traveling towards Stockholm and not Gothenburg! But worse, far worse, was to come. Something very venomous pricked me on the leg, then another and yet another more venomous prick. To my horror I saw my flannel trousers were swarming with ants. I had sat on an ant-hill! The carriage was empty. So I de-bagged myself and opened the window and shook the trousers vigorously to rid them of the pests. Just as I thought I had got rid of the last of them we entered a narrow cutting, on the slopes of which were stunted pine trees, some scorched by passing trains and bristling with sharp, bare branches. One of these infernal entanglements caught hold of my breeks and whipped them out of my hands!

In a few minutes the train began to slow down. We were coming to a station. What was I to do? I hadn't even a newspaper. The train stopped! I felt cold and sick. A man with an official cap put his head in at the door, gave a brief look at me and retreated. But soon he returned with a big uniformed man of the Brass Hat order. They looked at me and then at each other. Then the Brass Hat

said something quite unintelligible to me. I sat tight. What else could I do? But Brass Hat and his acolyte came into my compartment and each took me firmly by an arm and led me to the platform. Thus escorted, I was conducted down its whole length, the jeers and laughter of the passengers ringing in my ears, while the gentle evening breeze fluttered the scanty tails of my shirt at its will. I was shoved into a dark waiting-room and the key was turned in the lock. After what seemed an age a vehicle rumbled up to the station. A second door in the waiting-room, opposite to the platform, was opened and two grim-looking fellows in a queer uniform entered. They approached me with caution and, having taken me by each arm, they led me forth. Outside, a van of the Black Maria variety was in waiting. Into this I was bundled most unceremoniously. I was now so desperate that I didn't care what happened. After jolting over many ill-paved streets and bad roads, the van halted. I was pulled out and saw before me a forbidding-looking gateway with a small wicket door in it. Through this grim portal, on which the dread words "Abandon hope all ye who enter here" might have been fittingly displayed, I was pushed into a sort of porter's lodge, where there was a desk on which a large book lay, a bare table and a bench. A surly-looking fellow was in charge. But he was not so surly that he couldn't laugh at my plight—bless his eyes! He said something to one of my escort and motioned me to the bench. There I sat, wondering what was going to happen next. I hadn't

even heart for a smoke. In a short time the door opened and a little tubby, round-faced man, with horn spectacles and a big cigar in his mouth, came in. He looked at me and then said something in Swedish. I indicated that I did not understand and just said "British". "But", said he, "you are not mad? So! Ja, so! What about zeese?" (indicating the missing bags). He knew quite enough English to understand my plight, but he was a kindly little fellow and he said I must be cold and hungry and frightfully upset, and that he'd first find me raiment and then food and then transport back to Gothenburg from — where I was stranded.

It transpired that I had been brought to the District Lunatic Asylum and my fat little friend was its Resident Medical Officer. He was a true good Samaritan, if ever there was one; he lent me a pair of his trousers, which only reached a little way down my shins, he conjured up an excellent supper and, finally, he took me in his own carriage to the station where I boarded a goods train and travelled in the guard's van to Gothenburg. Not until he had dressed and fed me did this kind little doctor bid me to unfold my tale, and then he alternately laughed and cried with merriment. He actually infected me, and I began to see the huge joke it really was. God bless his kind heart, wherever he is! He even lent me some ready cash, for all mine had gone with my breeks. So I was able to tip the guard of the goods train handsomely and pay for a cab to the hotel. The night porter was half asleep and did not notice my strange attire.



This is no yarn. It is the plain, unvarnished truth. The little doctor must have dined out on it, for, twenty years after, my own story was told to me by a Swedish masseuse of high distinction. When I told her I was the victim, she nearly collapsed.

I was not in Sweden on pleasure bent, nor on adventure. I acquired a very considerable amount of valuable information which I put into a report and which helped us not a little in Ireland. All I brought back was turned to good account. So I think the modest cost that my trip involved was a good and wise expenditure. It was deemed so, at all events. I left Sweden with real regret. The people were, universally, so kindly, so intelligent and so genuinely friendly. They made no secret of anything but told me all I wanted to know.

But, I had to get back to my job, for big things were impending.

## CHAPTER V

Plunkett a M.P.—The C.D.B.—The Inauguration  
of the I.A.O.S.—The *Irish Homestead*

IN 1892 Plunkett had been elected M.P. for South County Dublin, with a huge majority; so his absence at Westminster was bound to throw a great deal more responsibility on my shoulders. He had previously been appointed a member of the Congested Districts Board, set up by Mr. Arthur Balfour when Chief Secretary for Ireland. I gathered that he was not always happy on that Board, which was too paternal for his robust ideas, and too timid in dealing with problems which might possibly infringe on the rights of the class, self-styled "legitimate traders". All the same, the C.D.B., as it came to be called, accomplished a good deal, though little of its work was calculated to help the spread of co-operation. Its operations have been amply described in its voluminous Reports and it is not part of my duty to recapitulate them. But it was a remarkable body, in this sense, that it was composed of men of widely divergent political and sectarian views, as was afterwards the Recess Committee, and also the governing body of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. The last, I think, dominated as it was by Horace Plunkett, gave the cue to those who created the other two bodies.

The inaugural meeting, which was to lead to the formation of the I.A.O.S., was held on the 18th April 1894 and was very influentially attended. Horace Plunkett presided and delivered an excellent speech. I remember he concluded it by quoting from Lord Houghton:

If what seemed afar so grand  
Turn to nothing in your hand,  
On again, the virtue lies  
In the struggle, not the prize.

He received enthusiastic applause. Then the late Lord Cloncurry proposed:

“That this meeting, having heard the principles of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, hereby approves of the same and resolves that immediate steps be taken to carry them into practical effect.”

The resolution was seconded by the late Coroner James Byrne, one of the staunchest co-operators that ever lived.

Being among the most progressive farmers in Munster, and a noted breeder of Shorthorn cattle, James Byrne was quick, beyond his time, to see what was good in every new movement, whether political or economic. Many years before co-operation was spoken of, he had taken an active part in the formation of farmers' clubs at Mallow and elsewhere. While they were mainly debating societies, where farmers congregated on market and Fair days, they helped to stir the sluggish thought of those days. Experiences were exchanged, and the

examples set by such enterprising men as James Byrne were followed by those who looked up to them as authorities on farming.

James Byrne was a Nationalist of a mild type; he had been a disciple of Isaac Butt's and had but little taste for the more militant policies of those who succeeded him as political leaders. He was a fervent admirer and supporter of Horace Plunkett, but he used to deplore to me privately Plunkett's addiction to interlarding his speeches with what good old James regarded as misplaced attempts at wit. "You know", he would say to me sadly, "he is a great man and a great thinker, but he has no sense of humour." The truth was that Plunkett's subtleties were too subtle to penetrate the practical and sedate mind of the Coroner. He frankly disliked them but, none the less, did the worthy man back up this new leader, even though he had little use for politics except as a means to his great end.

James Byrne was a most popular and highly respected member of our Committee, and was possessed of a sound judgment. But I do not think he was always clearly understood by his colleagues, because they could not sometimes catch the drift of what he said. He spoke with his low voice in a tone that could only be fully understood by those whose ears, like mine, were attuned to the southern accent, and there were times when even I failed to gather all the low-toned words which escaped through the jungle of his big beard.

When the Land Act of 1881 came into operation, the services of James Byrne, as land-valuer on

behalf of the tenants, had been in great demand. While his valuations were always in favour of the tenant, I believe they were perfectly honest. Rents had been far too high and could not possibly be paid out of the revenue from the land. As he was invariably opposed by valuers for the landlord, who leaned far the opposite way, it was not to be wondered at that the Land Commissioners often resorted to the simple expedient of "splitting the difference".

It had been a great matter to us in those early days to have secured on our Committee a Nationalist farmer of outstanding ability. His presence there gave assurance to other farmers to come into the movement and to turn a deaf ear to political and other intriguers, who eternally alleged that the co-operative movement was a "landlord's dodge" and a "red herring across the track of Home Rule".

Coroner Byrne served on the Committee up to the time of his death in 1914.

The first Ordinary General Meeting of the Society was held on the 10th May 1894. At this meeting the following Committee was elected: *President*—The Hon. Horace Plunkett, M.P.; *Vice-President*—The Rt. Hon. C. T. Redington; *Committee*—The Rev. T. A. Finlay, M.A., S.J.; Christopher Digges la Touche; The Lord Monteagle, K.P.; Thomas Sexton, M.P.; Major John Alexander, D.L.; Colonel Gerald R. Dease, D.L.; Coroner James Byrne, J.P.; James Musgrave, D.L.; John E. Redmond, M.P.; The Most Rev. Patrick O'Donnell, D.D.; Count Arthur Moore, D.L.; George F. Stewart, D.L.

It will be seen that the composition of the I.A.O.S. Committee was a novelty in Ireland, where almost every body constituted hitherto for any purpose whatever had almost invariably been tarred with some political brush or else was sectarianly tinged. Neither sectarianism nor politics was ever even mentioned at our meetings. Each member observed that wholesome fundamental rule with scrupulous punctiliousness. But, more than that, I am perfectly certain that, in their friendly intercourse with one another, all the members were spontaneously cordial and no word was ever said that could offend the susceptibilities of even the most sensitive. And that fine spirit of friendliness and toleration was irradiated from the I.A.O.S. to all the societies it formed, and but one breach was ever reported. That breach was speedily followed by the collapse of the offending society, a flourishing co-operative creamery which fell under the temporary spell of faction and became the prey of a proprietor.

Nobody other than Horace Plunkett could have attracted to himself such a remarkable body of men and, what is more, have infused into the majority of them such a measure of his own fine enthusiasm as to hold them together through so many years of strain, vicissitude and conflict. Such an attempt had never been previously made and, but for the unique personality of the founder, it could not have been made, nor, even if attempted, could it have succeeded.

But the words "non-sectarian" and "non-poli-

tical" in Ireland have always been used with a special significance. A body composed on these lines had always to exhibit a strict balance, and consequently in composing it account had to be taken of the political or religious associations attached to each name. Thus the opening resolution already referred to was proposed by a Unionist, Lord Cloncurry, and seconded by a Nationalist, Coroner James Byrne. Even in framing the original Committee a difficulty on this had arisen, which illustrates my point. But the manner in which it was met illustrates also the spirit of the movement.

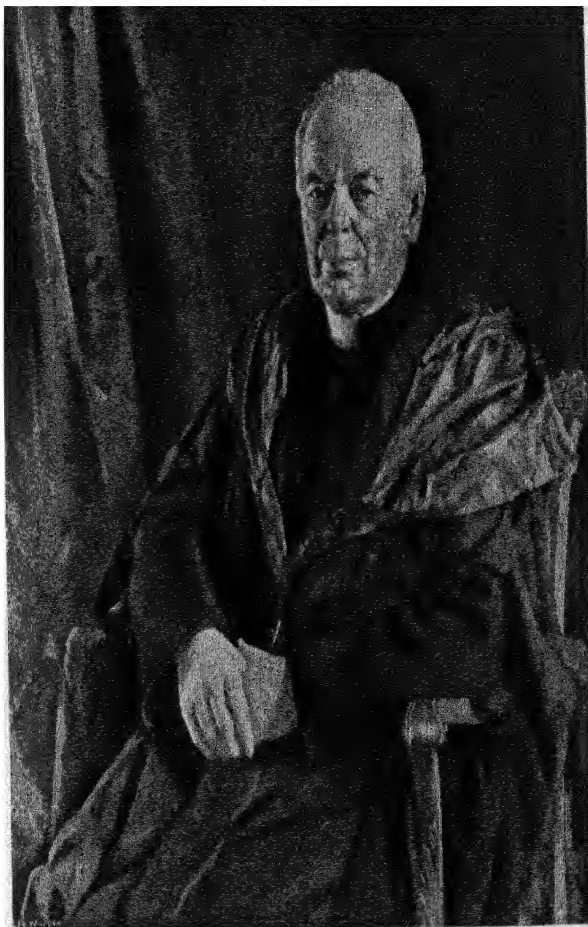
On the morning of the meeting Plunkett told me that he had been approached by one of the persons who had not then been nominated as a member of the Committee, a very rabid Unionist, who pointed out to him that the Nationalists would have a majority of one if, for the name of Mr. M. J. Cleary, V.S., there was not substituted that of a well-known Unionist. In fact he suggested himself. It was my delicate and unpleasant task to ask Mr. Cleary to efface himself. I did so and he behaved splendidly. He told me he would not, for any consideration, allow his name to go forward as a candidate, as he attached so much importance to the new movement that he would do anything rather than mar the harmony of the proceedings. His action was in sharp contrast to that of the man who displaced him.

That night, when the newly appointed Committee dined with the President and held their first meeting, I was appointed Secretary, at a salary of

£400 per annum, to me, in those days, a princely income. From the Committee I received nothing but the greatest kindness and consideration.

Let me sketch here two outstanding and representative figures of the men who worked with Plunkett. First comes the Rev. Thomas Aloysius Finlay, S.J., M.A., F.N.U.I., Professor of Political Economy, University College, Dublin, an eminent, talented and cultured Jesuit priest. I am deeply thankful to say that we still have him with us and that, in spite of advancing years, he is ever at hand to guide and advise with profoundest wisdom and an unrivalled knowledge of human nature. Of all our leaders, not even excepting Horace Plunkett, it has always seemed to me that none other was so thoroughly imbued with the true co-operative spirit. It would well repay any student of agricultural co-operation in Ireland, or, indeed, in any country, to read the reports of the speeches which he delivered at our annual general meetings and conferences, all of which are published fully in the Reports of the I.A.O.S. Plunkett's speeches at these meetings always seemed to me to be too long. They were admirable, closely reasoned and logical. But, I always thought the first draft was better stuff than the more polished, finished article, to perfect which he generally worked until the moment came for him to rise and speak. I fancy he felt this himself, for when he sat down he would turn to Father Finlay and whisper, "Father Tom, I think they'd like a little emphasis". And they usually got it! I have never listened to a more





THE REVEREND THOMAS A. FINLAY, S.J.

Portrait by Leo Whelan, R.H.A.



telling speaker. Father Finlay's voice was clear and incisive. He wasted no words; he got straight to the points he wished to make and then drove them home with irresistible force. Plunkett could be mildly, though sometimes acidly, sarcastic. Then his rapier thrusts were penetrating and artistic. There was more of his Scottish forefathers' claymore in the powerful cuts of the Vice-President. I do not wish to convey the impression that Father Finlay's Order should have been that of the Church Militant, but to make it clear that when the cause of co-operation was assailed it had no more valiant and skilful defender than he. He alone seemed to recognise that our somewhat sluggish people wanted shaking up if they were to make a success of the work which lay in their hands. And to him, alone, was given the power to dispel apathy and to turn a seemingly placid audience into a concourse of enthusiastic applauders. I am always sorry that I never heard him preach, for a very great preacher he must have been. There was no pretence about his co-operation; there could have been none in the practice of his religion. Father Finlay's sense of humour was as great as his intellectual qualities and attainments were high. None could tell a story better than he and none could enjoy a joke more heartily. Once he had to speak in a village on the borderland of Ulster, where the population were about evenly divided in their allegiance to the Orange and the Green. It was coming close to the Twelfth of July, when the Battle of the Boyne anniversary was to be celebrated, as was then and

still is customary, by the braying of bands and the banging of drums. The object of the meeting was the peaceful one of starting a co-operative creamery. Father Finlay was the only speaker available from the I.A.O.S., and he went alone. He found the audience sharply divided into two potentially hostile camps, the "Papishes" on one side of the house and the "Prasbytarians" on the other. There they sat, regarding each other grimly and dourly. There was nothing to choose between them. Both sides were distrustful of each other. It seemed certain that if one side were to support the project, the other would have none of it. The air had to be cleared somehow.

Father Finlay began quietly with the observation that it seemed strange to him that sensible men who all desired to have a creamery should concern themselves that day about a quarrel which had taken place more than two centuries before, between a Dutchman and a Scotsman. "Can we not", he asked, persuasively, "leave that old quarrel to be settled between the two protagonists—that is, if too great a gulf do not now divide them?" There was a long silence; then an aged "Prasbytarian" rose slowly and, looking round the room, ejaculated, "Dod, but the mon's raight".

Next to Father Finlay—though it seems almost invidious to particularise among the many excellent men who at one time or another served on the I.A.O.S. Committee—at least one deserves special mention: Christopher Digges la Touche. He was Managing Director of Guinness's Brewery and

who, collaborating in that great business with its chief brewer, William P. Geoghegan (afterwards a member of the I.A.O.S. Committee), laid the foundation of its marvellous growth and prosperity. I have always regarded Christopher la Touche as being the ablest man of any that I ever met. And he was also one of the most charming. Quiet, kindly and unassuming, one would scarcely expect to find in him a vast store of the most profound wisdom. In all my experience I met but one other man who could get to the bottom of a complicated problem and straighten it as quickly as he, and that was Patrick Hogan, the late Minister for Agriculture, whose penetration struck me as being almost uncanny. Busy as he was, La Touche had always an hour or more to spare for the problems of the I.A.O.S. Instinctively, he and Father Finlay sought each other out, and when their wise heads were done with any puzzle, no matter how complicated, one might be sure it was solved. Unhappily, Christopher la Touche fell into bad health and died in October 1914. He was a very good friend to me and taught me more than I had ever previously learned. When I went to him with some pet, but half-baked scheme he'd pass me his cigarette case and say, "Let's figure it out". Half a sheet of notepaper, covered with his small, neat handwriting, showed me every flaw in my plan. When he had done that and had gently reduced me to putty (provided my idea had any good in it), he'd light a fresh cigarette and, on another half-sheet, show me how the thing might be done. So, scores

and scores of times, La Touche prevented me from "going off at half-cock".

La Touche gave one the impression of being an ease-loving man, but I can recall how he devoted a week-end to paying a visit with me to the Credit Society at Doneraile. We arrived late at Mallow and on Sunday drove out to Doneraile, where he met the Committee, all of whom were charmed with his sympathetic manner and surprised at his thorough knowledge of the subject of co-operative credit. He had to return to Dublin by the night mail, which took five hours to accomplish the journey and had no sleeping accommodation.

It was not until May 1894, just after the first General Meeting of the I.A.O.S., that I attended my first creamery meeting in Ulster. It was at Lisbellaw, and was presided over by John Grey Vesey Porter, a very remarkable old gentleman, almost stone-blind, very rich and rather eccentric. The creamery was not, however, started there until four years later. The first co-operative creamery of any importance in Ulster was established at Omagh, and its president was another Mr. Porter, an influential merchant in the town, who was subsequently elected a member of the I.A.O.S. Committee. Prior to Omagh, a little creamery had been formed at Fintona and is still working. The Ulster farmers were as cautious about taking up co-operation as they had been in the Land Agitation. They let the southerners "pull the chestnuts out of the fire". But when they did take it up, it was almost impossible to keep pace with their demands.

In June of 1894 Mr. Henry W. Wolff (who, I regret to say, died in March 1931), the greatest English authority on co-operative credit, came over at the invitation of the I.A.O.S. and delivered an extremely interesting lecture on the subject. One of his most attentive listeners was the late Cardinal O'Donnell, who, as Bishop of Raphoe, was one of the original members of the Committee. Later on, his visit was followed by one from Mr. R. A. Yerburch, M.P. for Chester, who had formed an association to promote this type of co-operation among small-holders in England. He also lectured in Dublin and attended several meetings in County Cavan at the invitation of Mr. Thomas Lough, M.P. for Islington, who had a residence near Killeshandra and whose guests we were. After Mr. Yerburch, we had a visit from the celebrated Mr. Thomas Farrow, who acquired (shall I say) fame as the founder of Farrow's Bank, of which there was a branch in Dame Street, Dublin, as well as others elsewhere in Ireland. He visited Achill and wrote to me that he had discovered just the kind of man that would make an ideal secretary of a credit bank. But the I.A.O.S. Committee considered Achill too far from their base to be a safe ground for such an experiment. Lynchehaun was the name of the paragon discovered by Farrow. Not long after his discovery this paragon became notorious, for he beat his employer, a helpless old woman, into a state of insensibility and left her lying in a barn which he had set on fire in the hope that it would destroy the evidence of his brutality. He was

ultimately arrested, tried and convicted and sent to Maryborough Jail, from which he managed to escape and to flee to America. I believe he was subsequently extradited, but I do not know what became of him.

Towards the end of 1894 it was decided, on the recommendation of Father Finlay, to start a paper which was to be the organ of the movement, so, early in 1895, the *Irish Homestead* made its appearance, with Father Finlay as its editor-in-chief. It proved its value from the very start. I have a copy of the first volume and it is most interesting reading. I think the I.A.O.S. has an all-but-complete set of the bound volumes. This little unpretentious paper was worth at least as much as one first-class organiser to the I.A.O.S. But co-operation was unpopular with the trade, and advertisements, on which every paper must largely depend, were hard to get. Its circulation was lamentably restricted, and, gradually, it got into debt and had to be rescued by the liquidation of its bank overdraft by the I.A.O.S. This involved the payment of £400, but the services rendered by the paper were well worth that moderate sum.

Plunkett's optimism was magnificent. On the 8th May 1895 the Second Annual General Meeting was held, and in his address he said:

"Those who have grasped our scheme in its entirety will remember that we—that is, this Irish Agricultural Organisation Society—are only a temporary body; that in a few short years—five, we said last year, we now think less—the farmers will be



easily induced to use the organisation we have shown them how to establish as the basis of a powerful central body, which will be in the truest sense representative of Irish agriculture and capable of safeguarding the interests and elevating the condition of the Irish farmer. But, before we can withdraw our fostering hand, our work must be extended first over a larger area, and must embrace more branches of the farmers' industry."

To-day, forty years after this hopeful statement was made, while we find individual examples in plenty of successful co-operation locally, the farmers and their industry are without any semblance of a close-knit and powerful organisation which could provide adequate protection against the many perils, political and other, which constantly beset them. This sounds like a confession of failure. But we have not failed—far from it. Only, it will take the best part of another generation before the farmers of Ireland are sufficiently enlightened, or sufficiently disciplined by the bitter experiences to which every unorganised community must be exposed, and to which they are now exposed, to rise up in their strength and perfect the organisation, the foundations of which have been so laboriously and painfully laid. The principles upon which it is founded are as true to-day as they were then. The unhappy fact is that those for whom this work was done have not been true to the principles they professed.

## CHAPTER VI

The C.W.S. Creameries — Civil War — The  
I.A.O.S. as the Central Federation — “Non-  
controversial” Co-operation—Joint Purchase—A  
Revolution

ABOUT this time Christopher Redington, Resident Commissioner for National Education, our Vice-President, resigned, and Father Finlay was appointed as his successor. That great Churchman and co-operator has occupied that position ever since and has been a tower of strength to the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. He was a staunch and kindly friend to all of us, irrespective of our various beliefs or disbeliefs. By disposition suave and pacific, he would nevertheless put up a strenuous fight when the occasion called for it. An occasion soon arose. The Co-operative Wholesale Society acquired the Castle-mahon Co-operative Creamery, where the members had split on the question as to who should be “leader of the Irish race, at home and abroad”! Before the actual *débâcle* ensued, Father Finlay, in a trenchant speech, flayed the disputants. “You”, he said, “would presume to decide the destinies of your country while you exhibit to the world the miserable spectacle of a divided community which cannot agree to keep the churn in its creamery revolving!”

Immediately that this move by the C.W.S. was reported to me I went to see Stokes, who was their Limerick agent and who had, up to that time, been very helpful to us and had attended many meetings with me. I charged him with gross treachery in no measured language, but he swore, by all his gods, that he was innocent, and this action in acquiring Castlemahon had been actually taken by his directors against his wishes and advice. As I was leaving him he blurted out, "If the C.W.S. had not acquired it, some butter merchant, unfriendly to you, would have done so." "Stokes", I said, "your people should have allowed the concern to rot before they touched it. What you have said just now makes me doubt the sincerity of all your other protestations." He was very indignant. Years afterwards I learned from directors of the C.W.S. that it was Stokes himself who had led them into what afterwards proved a disastrous policy for themselves and a temporarily injurious one for us. He was a slow-witted man. He had been a butter buyer of some importance in Limerick in the pre-creamery days, and even after their coming he enjoyed an extensive business. But the Irish Co-operative Agency Society had been started—a federation of creameries—designed to market their own product. Stokes must have fancied that he saw "the writing on the wall", and that, if he didn't do something drastic, his occupation would be gone. That year (1891) at the Co-operative Congress at Lincoln, the Chairman of the C.W.S., Mr. J. T. W. Mitchell, a splendid type of the whole-hog

co-operator, but entirely ignorant of the conditions that existed in Ireland in those stormy times (as to which he should have been advised by Stokes), announced to the assembled delegates that it was the intention of the C.W.S. to acquire land in Ireland, to stock it with cows and to erect and operate creameries. Horace Plunkett and I were present as delegates and we made such protest as we could, for we knew the project was fantastic. But we made no impression. Mitchell's other fine services to the English Movement had given him a position and power sufficient to enable him to carry his proposal. I remember that it was stoutly opposed by Henry W. Wolff, Henry Vivian, Edward Owen Greening, George Jacob Holyoake, and by many other orthodox co-operators of the old school. The project was disapproved of by J. C. Gray, then General Secretary to the Co-operative Union, who had succeeded that splendid old co-operator and philanthropist, Edward Vansittart Neale. But, as a salaried official, he could not express his opinions at Congress.

Shortly after this the C.W.S. fired their second shell. They announced their intention to erect, equip and operate twelve creameries in the south of Ireland, mainly in Kerry and Limerick, and they named the twelve centres and gave the dates on which meetings would be held at each. So, nobody else being forthcoming, I had to gird up my loins and attend every meeting. But my efforts were fruitless. I found that the wealth and resources of the C.W.S. had been flaunted before

the communities concerned and, where the centre was a town or village, the traders had been warned against the dangers of allowing any other co-operative society a footing. I was confronted with the questions, "Won't the Wholesale Society bring a lot of money into the district? And, won't it save us a lot of trouble? What does your Society offer us to compare with that?"

So I had to fall back on "heckling" Stokes, which I did with all the venom I could muster, and I often made him squirm. But the ground had been so well prepared that my opposition was futile. So the twelve creameries were started, and, shortly afterwards, eighty or ninety others were added to them. Though substantial and solid, they were ill-designed, and their equipment with machinery became a virtual monopoly of one firm, which must have made a pretty penny out of the C.W.S. As time went on, defects, not unknown in the co-operative creameries, I must admit, began to disclose themselves in the C.W.S. creameries. Management was indifferent and occasionally dishonest, for there was no effective supervision. Then the C.W.S., advised, as I can only suppose, by Stokes, introduced a system of money-lending, modelled precisely on the lines previously followed by the Cork butter merchants. A needy farmer in the lean and early months of the year required a loan. He had no difficulty in getting it from the C.W.S., provided he undertook to repay in milk throughout the season. Cash would not be accepted. Thus the C.W.S. were able to secure a tied milk supply, one

which was, under the agreement with the supplier, unalienable. As time went on, the acid test of price began to operate, and it was found by the suppliers of milk to the C.W.S. creameries that they were not getting as good prices as were the suppliers to the co-operative creameries. Then the fun began. The complaint as to bad prices spread and the C.W.S. was up against angry meetings of suppliers with whom Stokes could make no sort of show. Ultimately, the C.W.S. capitulated and offered to sell *en bloc*. Of course this offer had to be rejected, for they had planted creameries in places where the milk supply was insufficient, to begin with, and these were, therefore, worthless. Further, the I.A.O.S. could not create out of a horde of unorganised farmers, in close on a hundred localities, one compact organisation to take over all the creameries simultaneously, even if such a step had been advisable. The C.W.S. had lost heavily in the trading operations of their creameries, and they had now to face a further heavy loss in realising the asset value of their property. Before the actual transfer of the C.W.S. creameries began, there were conferences between the C.W.S. and the I.A.O.S. on neutral ground, in which the Irish Section of the Co-operative Union acted as an intermediary. At the conference held in Newry Father Finlay and I attended to represent the I.A.O.S. At this conference an agreement was reached, mainly through the good offices of Mr. W. J. McGuffin, President of the Belfast Co-operative Society, whereby the C.W.S. undertook to negotiate with

co-operative societies, to be organised by the I.A.O.S., for the purchase of individual creameries at a price to be fixed by arbitration. It was a huge triumph for the I.A.O.S. But the loss in cash and reputation to the C.W.S. has never been quite forgotten by some of the older members.

The C.W.S. could have defeated the I.A.O.S. easily, if that was their intention, which I doubt, for they could have introduced "whole-hog" co-operation into the dairying districts of Ireland as an alternative to the "non-controversial" co-operation advocated by the I.A.O.S. All they need have done was to establish a store in connection with every one of the creameries, and, instead of tying their suppliers by money loans, they could have, quite legitimately, given them all they required in kind, taking their milk *per contra*. We could never have ousted them. Then, if they were genuinely inclined to introduce co-operation into Ireland, as I firmly believe many of the directors were, they could have offered to sell at an agreed price to the farmers the properties they had created and the goodwill of the business they had established. And further, they could have made it a condition of the transfer that all the butter was to be reserved for them.

This lamentable and regrettable episode in the history of our movement left a lingering rancour in the minds of our good friends in Manchester, simply because they did not know the facts. The Co-operative Union was compelled to cease its contribution—a very liberal one—to our funds, in consequence, and our delegates were no longer *personae*

*gratae* at Congress. Of course judgment had gone, by default, against us. We were accused of having incited the milk-supplying farmers to boycott the C.W.S. in order that they might acquire the creameries at "scrap" price. We did nothing of the kind. Over and over again, when I found such a disposition evinced, I argued that the C.W.S. had only filled a want, though in a wrong way, which should have been supplied by the farmers themselves, and, that in every case where they were dissatisfied with the C.W.S., they ought to negotiate for the acquisition by purchase of the creamery on fairly arbitrated terms. I got no credit for this attitude in Manchester, and it made me suspect by the farmers, who hinted that I was more interested in the C.W.S. than in them. In all such cases I shook the dust of the place off my feet and left them to do their bargaining as they pleased. I can quite honestly say that this withdrawal was of no advantage to either side. I knew the C.W.S. in their creamery policy had made a terrible blunder and I recognised that, from their point of view, it had been well-intentioned. So I did my utmost to secure them a "square deal" in the disposal of their creameries. In a great many cases I succeeded. But, in their final disposal the C.W.S. must have dropped nearly £100,000, not to speak of the trading losses that they had suffered.

This conversion to nominal co-operation, without the very necessary preliminary instruction in co-operative principles, added a considerable number of creameries to our rapidly growing list. On



paper, it seemed that we were doing very well. But we would have been better without some of the so-called co-operative concerns, especially those which had made their bargains without reference to the I.A.O.S., but which were forced to come to it for advice when their purchases had been completed. Personally, I got little satisfaction out of this victory over the C.W.S. I had seen for myself the magnificent work accomplished by the British Co-operative Movement. It was a real pain to me when they entered on this Irish Creamery scheme. I knew it was co-operatively wrong and fundamentally unsound. I wasted hours of entreaty and argument on the phlegmatic Stokes. Gray, of the Co-operative Union, was entirely with us. He was not as great a personality as his predecessor, Vansittart Neale, but he was a man of real vision. This is proved by his last public utterance. In that he confessed his faith and hope in co-operation as the ultimate salvation of the industrial world. He knew he had not long to live and it was his "Swan Song". Not long ago I was glad to find that there were still some British co-operators who cherished his beliefs and hopes.

It will, I hope, be understood that we could have had no sympathy with those groups of unenterprising farmers who, first having invited the C.W.S. to do for them what they should have done for themselves, then, when they were dissatisfied with their dealings with the body they had asked to repair their own neglect, sought to possess themselves of the creameries at a break-up price. The

conversion of these concerns, save in a few instances, gave us no feeling of pride, such as came to us when a creamery had been established on the right lines by a community of earnest, honest men, often in the face of great difficulty. Many of these eleventh-hour societies were merely "creamery grabbers".

Mr. Percy Redfern, in *The Story of the C.W.S.*, deals not unfairly with this episode, for he does not complain of the manner in which Irish co-operators resisted and opposed, relentlessly, this invasion of their field of action by the C.W.S. Rather does he applaud their strenuous efforts and their sturdy pugnacity. He complains, however, that they singled out the C.W.S. for attack rather than other creamery proprietors or firms owning multiple shops. He maintains that the C.W.S. was animated solely by the desire to help Irish farmers, which Irish co-operators never denied at any time, although they pointed out that well-intentioned efforts of the C.W.S. to do so followed utterly wrong lines. The C.W.S. encroachment was resisted by us *because they were co-operators*, though only so in England. There was no vestige of co-operation in their Irish creamery policy, for it was on all fours with that of all other creamery proprietors. Under their system the Irish farmer was regarded merely as a producer of milk to be supplied to their creameries, there converted into butter to be consumed by the members of their federated societies in England. What we endeavoured to make the C.W.S. understand, before fighting actually began,

was that, in our view, there was the widest possible difference between their Irish creamery policy and their recently developed English policy of controlling production in that country for the benefit of the consumers' movement as a whole. Even there the C.W.S. policy of securing control of production met with much opposition from the older school of co-operators and, naturally, from many of the Co-operative Productive Societies which saw their existence threatened. Whatever justification there may have been for controlling co-operative production in England for the benefit of the English co-operative consumer, there was none whatever for starting creameries to that end in Ireland. The C.W.S. directors were fully aware of the existence of the Agricultural Co-operative Movement in Ireland and, up to the time that they embarked on their creamery venture, had been most sympathetic towards it. It seems strange that they should have entered on a course of action which was bound to make our hard task of inculcating in the Irish farmer the spirit of self-reliance infinitely more difficult. Still, they did not desist until warned by heavy trading losses and growing antagonism between their milk-supplying farmers and themselves, nor until, as Mr. Redfern puts it, they had "suffered the common experience of those Englishmen who seek to pave the bogs of Ireland with good intentions".

About this time John Redmond resigned his seat on the Committee, where he had seldom sat, and his place was filled by the co-option of his brother,

Major W. H. K. Redmond, also an M.P. I think he only attended two meetings. But we had to get names "to conjure with". On the few occasions of our meeting, he seemed to me exactly the sort of man his fine death in the Great War proved him to be—a gallant fighter in any cause that appeared to him to be just.

Early in the year 1896 it was decided to admit societies to representation on the Committee. Up to that time all the funds for organisation and the control of their expenditure had been vested in the Committee, which was representative, only, of the individual subscribers. This development was epoch-making, inasmuch as it, ultimately, gave the affiliated societies the control of the Central Organisation. In the first instance, the representation of the provinces on the Committee was as follows: Munster, 3; Leinster, 2; Ulster, 2; and Connaught, 1. By this change in its constitution, the I.A.O.S. became, truly, the federation of the societies it had formed. The great majority of societies affiliated, and our hopes ran high. We envisaged an organisation, financed adequately and controlled intelligently, by the co-operative societies, in which we aspired and hoped to see every farmer in Ireland enrolled. And it was no visionary scheme. If it had been realised, the I.A.O.S. to-day would have been the most powerful force in the country. The failure to accomplish this great end was not due to any defect in its programme but to the lamentable lack of public spirit which still haunts us.

Years ago, a German economist of high reputa-

tion, and a great friend of mine, said to me: "I do not desire to dash your hopes, nor to restrain your energies. But, you Irish—you can *conspire*, but you cannot *combine*."

An organisation of combined farmers, divested of politics, or religious differences, closely knit together in combination for the attainment of one great object, could have decided the political and economic fate of this country without the firing of a single shot or having to witness the hateful partition of our little island. For Ulster had become as keenly alive to the advantages of co-operation as the rest of Ireland. The opportunity was lost—lost for all time. Too much "policy" had latterly crept into our programme. Even where a thing was good in itself, and earnestly demanded by the farmers, it was often turned down lest it should arouse trade or political opposition. The earlier robustness of pre-I.A.O.S. days had given place to "non-controversial" co-operation. Quite apart from the fact that there could be no really effective co-operation without arousing hostility in some quarter, the policy of following the line of the least resistance did not appeal to the farmers. I am convinced that our otherwise excellent I.A.O.S. Committee committed the bad blunder of trying to be all things to all men. I often thought that Plunkett must have held the same view. He was too able a man not to have realised that, however much we might curtail our programme, we were hated and feared by a large section of the traders, who always perceived the danger of the co-opera-

tive store lurking in the shadow of the creameries and the credit societies. They could not have hated us any more if we had gone out boldly on a whole-hog co-operative campaign. The politicians were equally distrustful and apprehensive. They feared, and even stated repeatedly on public platforms, that co-operation was nothing more or less than an insidious attempt to frustrate their efforts to obtain Home Rule.

One really robust little group of Agricultural Societies in the neighbourhood of Thurles, whose only finances consisted of a £1 share per member, on which half a crown had been paid up, accomplished a great feat. Superphosphate was very largely used in top-dressing grass land in the locality and was purchased from local dealers, always at retail prices, mainly regulated in accordance with the estimated astuteness of the buyer and his ability to pay. The members of this little group of six societies held a conference, which I attended. Many of the delegates were Poor Law Guardians and knew all about advertising for tenders and dealing with them. They realised that they were being fleeced by the local traders; they also knew that the fertiliser manufacturers were bound firmly in a ring which had foolishly refused to deal with co-operative societies even for cash. They ascertained the total requirements of the six societies and, having bulked them, advertised for tenders for their supply. One manufacturer, tempted by the size of the business, broke away secretly from the ring and tendered, unknown to the rest. There was a meeting of

the members of the ring for the purpose of safeguarding their interests and those of the traders who had hitherto been the sole distributing agents for their products. An agreement had been prepared, binding all the members of the ring not to deal with co-operative societies. I had better give the account of this meeting as nearly as possible in the words of the cute old manufacturer who had secretly tendered for and had secured the business of the societies. "We all met", said he to me, "at ——. Every man-jack of them was there, big and little. The agreement was produced and read and we were all asked to put our names to it. Did I approve of it? I *did*, moryah! Indeed, then I didn't. But I had a mind to make some of those lads look dam' foolish before I was done with them. Mind you, I had my contract for an unlimited supply of superphosphate, which I never made and don't want to make, with ——. They couldn't cod me. So, says I, here Mr. —, says I, you're the biggest man in this meeting. ('Twas with his firm I had the superphosphate contract made.) Let us see your signature at the top. And, faith, he signed it all right, and so did the others. Then says — to me, now Mr. —, we haven't got your signature yet. No, says I, and ye won't get it aither. Ye may all go to hell now, for I have the co-operative contract in my pocket!" The old boy almost wept with joy at the way he had spoofed the ring. It appeared that he had never been treated with much consideration by the rest of the trade, so he was glad to pay them off.

This first essay at joint purchase on a really big scale of agricultural requisites resulted in a saving of about 40 per cent in the price of fertilisers. The smallest farmer, who was a member of a society, could buy his requirements at wholesale prices. The arrival of the consignment, in a special train to Thurles, was treated as a great occasion, as indeed it was. On arrival, I had taken care to see that the superphosphate and other fertilisers were properly sampled in accordance with the provisions of the Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Act, hitherto a dead letter. This preliminary having been duly carried out at the railway station, the concourse of co-operating farmers, with the horses drawing their carts gaily decorated with ribbons, and headed by a local band playing national airs, loaded up their lots and dispersed, cheering vociferously, through the town of Thurles. Consternation reigned in the shops which had hitherto had the monopoly of this trade. But the crowning triumph of combined purchase had not yet been achieved. Some of the participating farmers used to buy, in addition to superphosphate, "special manures", sold hitherto at prices bearing little relation to their true value. We, in the I.A.O.S., as I have said, had taken the precaution to ascertain the actual commercial values of phosphates, soluble and insoluble, and of nitrogen. So we were in a position to give buyers a formula whereby they could, for themselves, calculate its actual value. Of course these "special" manures were also sampled for analysis and duly analysed. In a few cases, analysis proved the manure to be



deficient, in one or other ingredient. The analyst's certificate, quite unimpeachable because carried out in accordance with the Act, was sent to the merchant who supplied the goods, together with a request for a refund of the amount representing the deficiency. By return of post came back letters from the merchant, enclosing cheques for the amount demanded. Never, in all the history of Thurles, had a farmer been refunded one bob for a deficiency in the value of fertilisers. The refund was insignificant in £ s. d., but its payment made almost a deeper impression than had the newly acquired power to purchase at wholesale rather than retail prices. It was a revelation of the power inherent in co-operative organisation which they had not hitherto understood or appreciated.

The ripples that followed this first incursion into the domain of wholesale purchasing spread all over the country, like the circles on a pool into which one has thrown a stone. Not only in Thurles, where the power of co-operative purchase had demonstrated itself, but all over Ireland, the retail prices of artificial manures dropped to an unheard-of level. The traders dreaded the advance of co-operative purchase and tried to forestall it by lowering their charges. So this locally conceived adventure into "big business" resulted in a saving of tens of thousands of pounds in the annual expenditure of farmers all over Ireland.

Rightly or wrongly, I have always regarded this almost parochial transaction as one of the biggest things ever accomplished by our movement. And,

did it injure the manufacturers? Not a bit of it, but rather the reverse. Only three years ago, the head of the largest firm in the trade told me that, since the advent of co-operation, his business had been increased tenfold. This was due, in the first instance, to the reduced prices of the commodities to the farmer, and to their more intelligent application, under the guidance of the Department of Agriculture. And I doubt very much whether the retail traders suffered more than a temporary dislocation of their trade. Artificial manures were almost invariably sold in the spring, to be paid for in the autumn when the harvest had been gathered and cashed. There was always the risk in such business of the buyer on long credit being unable to meet his engagement from failure of crops or livestock losses. Moreover, the saving in expense to the farmer enhanced his ability to meet his other engagements to the trader. All the same, the traders kept on chanting their eternal hymn of hate.

To enliven this somewhat dull recital of a very great achievement, I think I may be permitted to interlard a story.

A certain Father John —, a most stalwart supporter of co-operation, had grown grey as a curate in the service of his Church and had become almost hopeless of promotion to the position of parish priest. His Bishop, connected widely with the trading class, frowned on his efforts to emancipate his gombeen-ridden parishioners, and poor Father John was moved from one miserable cure of souls to another yet more miserable. All the time

he sent his tiny subscription—all that he could afford—to the I.A.O.S. One day he came to me in high glee. “I have caught the rascal”, he shouted, “the fellow that wasn’t content with robbing the poor people but he must attempt to rob the Almighty God!” This sounded pretty bad. I asked Father John to explain, and he told me that for a long time he had mistrusted the genuineness of the candles supplied to his Church by a certain trader. Such candles should be of pure wax. He had sent one of the suspected candles to Sir Charles Cameron, the City Analyst, who had reported that it was a common paraffin candle. Unfortunately for Father John, the purveyor of the spurious and sacrilegious candles was a near relative to his Bishop. So the poor man was again moved and to the most undesirable cure in the whole diocese. Then the Bishop died, and a really great Churchman, of wide Christian charity and unbounded kindness, succeeded him. One of his first acts was to give Father John a parish of his own. He could now write P.P. after his name. True, it was a very poor and remote parish, but to Father John it was a heaven on earth. He had been in the midst of misery all his life and the extreme poverty of his new parish was nothing new to him. He speedily organised his people in a society designed to protect them against the rapacity of the traders.

A great dinner was arranged to celebrate the appointment of the new Bishop. To it, in common with all the other priests in the diocese, Father John was bidden. His seat was far removed from that of

the Bishop, but Father John bided his time. Gaps occurred, as the evening wore on, and he gradually edged his way up to be within speaking distance of the new Bishop. Emboldened by a kindly nod and smile, he reached the vacant seat next to the Bishop. He thanked him fervently for having raised him to the dignity of parish priest. Then he felt it due to himself to say a little, but a very pungent little, about the Bishop's predecessor. The kindly man laid his hand gently on Father John's arm. "Father John", said he, "*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. The late Bishop has gone to his reward. But it is a very long and lonesome road to ——. And, after what you have just been saying, you surely wouldn't like to meet his ghost on your way home?"

Father John hesitated a little, then he replied, "Indeed an' I would *not*—I wouldn't care to get a clout from a red-hot crozier!"

## CHAPTER VII

### The Report of the Recess Committee—A Strange Omission

THE Report of the Recess Committee was issued in 1896. This very remarkable document was destined to bring about little short of a revolution in the agricultural and industrial conditions of the country. The Committee was presided over by Horace Plunkett and was composed of men of such divergent views as John Redmond, his colleague; William Field, M.P.; the Right Hon. Thomas Sinclair, D.L., and the Right Hon. Thomas Andrews—leaders in Ulster. It consisted of twenty-two members and the chairman. There was also an Ulster Consultative Committee, having James Musgrave, D.L. (afterwards Sir James), as its chairman, and thirteen members, all prominent in the business and educational life of the province. The object of the Recess Committee was to formulate a scheme, based on the experience of foreign agricultural countries, whose main industry had been improved and developed to a high standard of efficiency through the sympathetic and intelligent co-operation of the State with voluntary associations, which would serve as a guide to the British Government in framing legislation to provide

Ireland with a Department of Agriculture and Industries suited to the needs of the country. The Appendices contained reports on the nature and extent of State aid in ten countries, and were furnished by Mr. Michael G. Mulhall in eight instances and by Mr. T. P. Gill in two. There were also memorandums on Agricultural Co-operation, supplied by the I.A.O.S.; on Agricultural and Technical Education, by Mr. Arnold Graves; and on Technical Education applied to Artistic Handicrafts in Ireland, by Mr. T. W. Rolleston. The whole field of enquiry was thus very carefully and exhaustively surveyed.

The Report of the Recess Committee was as interesting as it was novel. It should be read to-day by anyone who is concerned in the organisation of Agriculture. It is not my purpose to deal in detail with the Report, but I do not think it would be out of place if I were to quote the opening paragraph in full:

“We believe that it will facilitate the study of this Report if the General Conclusion arrived at by the Committee be stated at the outset. It is (1) that the administration of State aid to Agriculture and Industries in Ireland, on the principles to be described, can be most effectively carried out by including the two branches of Agriculture and Industries, and the Technical Instruction relating thereto, under the care of one Department of Government specially created for the purpose; and (2) that this Department should consist of a Board with a Minister of Agriculture and Industries, responsible to Parliament, at its head, and assisted

by a Consultative Council representative of the agricultural and industrial interests of the Country."

Page 72 of the Report goes on to say:

"It is our opinion that the new Department of Government, following herein the example of the State abroad, should grant subventions to Societies, *not being trading bodies*, which undertake to promote the organisation of farmers for the improvement of their industry by their own efforts."

All through the Report it is enjoined that the new Department should *supplement* the efforts of the voluntary associations but never attempt to provide a *substitute* for them; it should stimulate organised effort in every way possible in order to make the people more self-reliant and aware that they had it in their power to do far more to help themselves by co-operating than it would be possible for any Government to do for them.

Naturally, as soon as this Report was issued, we in the I.A.O.S. got busy. We held District Conferences all over the country which were very well attended. At these meetings the recommendations of the Recess Committee, in condensed form, were submitted for consideration. Everywhere they were endorsed, generally *nem. con.* The farmers were in a tight place and well they knew it. But I felt it my duty, and impressed it on my subordinates, to make it perfectly clear to the delegates that the new Department could not, of itself, work miracles, but that it would be expected of them to advance as far as they possibly could in their societies towards the

end they desired to attain, and that then, and only then, could they reap the benefits expected from the State.

I think at that time of expectation we had aroused an enthusiasm for co-operation which almost reached its peak. Of course the new Department was popularly endowed, in advance, with almost magical powers. It could, in the minds of the people, almost transmute mud into gold. One had to be eternally throwing cold water on these fanciful ideas and reminding the farmers that the hard and narrow road to success depended ever so much more on themselves than on the State. To a people alternately coerced and spoon fed, our admonitions were very unpalatable. Constantly I was met with the query, "What is this new Department going to do, at all, unless it puts more money in our pockets? And, I suppose, we'll be taxed for it just the same as we are for all them — Boards." It can be said, truthfully, that at this period, the I.A.O.S. did a very valuable service to the country in educating the members of the societies to a proper understanding of the relations which should exist between their organisation and the Department which was designed and intended to second their efforts.

However that may be, we strove hard to implant a proper understanding of this novel policy and, when all the societies' delegates assembled in General Conference in 1896, they gave their unstinted blessing to the new departure. This approval was subsequently endorsed by the next General Conference. Then it was found by the British



Government that the passage of Mr. Gerald Balfour's Local Government Bill should have precedence. This great measure swept away the old Grand Jury system and substituted for it County Councils, which, on the whole, have worked well. It was also necessary to enact this measure before the Agriculture and Technical Instruction Bill was placed on the Statute Book, because upon its passage depended much of the democratic element that was incorporated in the subsequent legislation. Of course the societies, sadly in need of technical instruction and advice, chafed at the delay, but we managed to restrain them. The excitement of the County Council elections helped us. Elections in Ireland are always an unmitigated joy.

The Report on Denmark, by the late T. P. Gill, was, naturally, of the greatest interest to us in Ireland, because the conditions prevailing there more closely resembled ours than did those of any other country. He dealt very fully with the co-operative creameries, the co-operative bacon factories and the co-operative marketing of eggs, also with co-operative societies for improving the breeds of cattle, horses and pigs, for bee-keeping, as well as for fruit-growing and horticulture generally.

At the time of his visit there must have been in Denmark between 600 and 700 Co-operative Consumers' Societies for supplying domestic and, in most cases, agricultural requirements. In the year 1892 there were 500 of such societies; in 1898 they had increased to 800, while the total number to-day is about 1800. In his report to the Recess Committee

Gill ignored the existence of these societies completely, and yet they must have contributed far more than the societies for promoting horticulture and bee-keeping towards the amazing prosperity which Denmark enjoyed. His colleague, M. G. Mulhall, invariably mentioned the consumers' societies and accorded to them their full meed of praise. Gill's omission to mention these societies was, beyond doubt, intentional. His aim was to pave the way for the coming of the new Department, and he was not going to create difficulties beforehand by reporting the fact that co-operation of the most "controversial" kind was wide-spread in Denmark and was growing rapidly. It would have alarmed both traders and politicians and aroused their hostility. This may have been good *policy*, but when I afterwards discovered the facts, the discovery threw a somewhat sinister light on the deliberate way in which distributive co-operation was discouraged in the I.A.O.S. and, subsequently, positively barred, by the Department of Agriculture. Had it not been for the plucky action of that little group of societies round about Thurles, Irish farmers might still be paying through the nose for their fertilisers and, what was worse, buying worthless seeds.

The results of this mistaken policy in Ireland to-day are striking as compared with those of Denmark, where farmers and others were not only free but actually encouraged to engage in any form of co-operation they desired or needed. In Denmark, from 200 of such societies which existed in

1885, the total has now reached 1800. What better evidence could there be of their value? In Ireland, there were at one time between 400 and 500 distributive societies, mostly dealing with agricultural requirements, though a good many had stores from which domestic goods were supplied. To-day that number has fallen to less than 100. They had been regarded as nobody's children and were left to sink or swim. And yet, they provided the only type of co-operative society in which farmers and labourers, often unhappily antagonistic, could have come together for their mutual benefit and have been afforded the only opportunity of arriving at a better understanding with one another.

Ireland has always suffered from a plague of small shopkeepers. To-day the number of this parasitical class has swollen to an extent which renders it impossible for them to make a living except by extorting prices which have made the poor man's market too dear for the well-to-do to buy in. The co-operative stores provide the only remedy in such cases. It can always draw its stocks of goods from reliable sources at bed-rock prices and, given even reasonably good management, together with a strict curtailment of credit, it can put an end to the huxter class of traders. It should be borne in mind that our Co-operative Agricultural Movement began with the co-operative store at Dunsany which Horace Plunkett had organised at his native place in County Meath, long before his second venture, on the same lines, at Doneraile.

Since I have already referred several times to Gill, and shall have much more occasion to do so, let me sketch the personage.

Thomas Patrick Gill had been one of Parnell's party, one of the organisers of the "Plan of Campaign", an originator of "New Tipperary", leader writer to *The Freeman's Journal*, editor of the whilom Tory *Dublin Daily Express* and of the *Irish Homestead*; Secretary to the Recess Committee, member of the I.A.O.S. Committee, go-between Parnell and the anti-Parnellites during the "Boulogne negotiations", and he ended as first Secretary to the Department of Agriculture and other Industries for Ireland—and a Civil Servant, under the flag he had hitherto fought and mildly reviled.

"T. P.", to this day, remains to me a mystery. I think he must have been a bit of a mystery to himself. He was one of the best companions and had a queer charm about him that almost blotted out his strangely composite past. There was nobody who could tell the tales of the old men of North Tipperary better than he could, nor recount their stories of heroism and stark savagery in the same manner. Yet, there was always a something elusive about him which my simple mind could never penetrate. I had been accustomed to look at things squarely. When one tried to look at "T. P.", the vision was all oblique. George Russell (A.E.) was asked to explain him once and he said, "I have devised two mottoes for 'T. P.' One is 'the longest way round is the shortest way home' and the other is like unto it—"The means are more

important than the end'." Both, or either, fitted "T. P." as did his well-groomed skin. When I first met him, in Limerick, with Plunkett, who was always attracted by ability, and in this case by the brilliancy of "T. P.'s" journalism—for indeed he had few peers at the time—I saw a young, spare man, wearing glasses, with a suave manner but rather a bored expression. He had been immersed in big undertakings, the "Plan of Campaign", "New Tipperary", the "Boulogne Negotiations" and God knows what else. So co-operation seemed to him, as I surmised, a faintly stale egg, offered to him to be eaten without salt. In those early days he had not grown the Henri Quatre beard, nor had he cultivated his studied and stupendous yawn of boredom, both of which were subsequently immortalised by George Moore. He was suave, he was condescending, he was almost humble, sitting at my feet and hearing me lay down the law about creameries and the like. The man cleverly surrounded me with a mist of flattery for what he called my "achievements" and seemed humbly anxious to learn all that there was to be learned about this new industrial venture. I was fairly innocent of the guiles of men in those days, but when he went a little too far with his eulogiums and began to talk of me as a "nation builder", I curled up. I said "Hang it, man, we know next to nothing. We are blundering along in the dark, on the right lines, I hope and believe; but the foreigners know far more than we do. Why can't we get at their knowledge?" My remark had stemmed the

tide of "T. P.'s" rather fulsome flattery, for I had discovered innumerable faults in our primitive methods of organisation and therefore had no illusions. I knew we were making headway, but I felt in my bones that we were sailing an uncharted sea.

And so it was that "T. P." came into our daily life in the I.A.O.S. He was chock-full of *bonhomie* and of *bons mots*. But there was always the strange intangible something between us that prevented us from becoming *bons camarades*.

I take off my hat in all sincerity to him for his splendid work in connection with the Savings Certificate movement, to which he devoted himself with all his remaining energy after his retirement until the day of his death. It was a fine achievement and I believe owed much to his personality.

## CHAPTER VIII

The Coming of the D.A.T.I.—The Secretary-  
ship: Gill's Appointment—Disillusionment

THE Agriculture and Technical Instruction Act, in due course, passed through all its stages at Westminster and became law. As well as I can remember, it met with no very serious opposition in Parliament. I have little doubt that this easy passage was largely due to the total elimination of anything even hinting at the possibility of support for any but the "non-controversial" brand of co-operation. When the time came for the setting up of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland and Horace Plunkett had been appointed as its first Vice-President, my family, my friends and even many of the members of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society Committee urged me to prefer my claims for the position of Secretary. It was a very well endowed post, carrying a pension on Civil Service scale. The prospect, from that point of view, was tempting in the extreme. The salary was more than three times that I enjoyed as secretary of the I.A.O.S. and, in the I.A.O.S. there was no promise of pension. But I loved my freedom, and the I.A.O.S. Committee had given me a pretty free hand. I always had a

hatred of control, such as paralyses even our present-day Civil Service. I could be amenable to discipline, but I felt in my bones that anything that was of the smallest good in me would be absolutely killed by "Treasury Regulations". I had found, in the work of the I.A.O.S., something that inspired me to slave and drudge and strive for. I had made countless friends among the simple country people with whom my work lay. I understood them and they understood me. In those days I had attained to a degree of popularity and trust which I doubt if any politician reached. But I had not "lost the common touch", and I was loath to lose it. I had not ever lied to the audiences I addressed, nor had I told them fairy tales of fortunes to be made out of the creameries. So I could revisit the scenes of early meetings without having to hedge or retract. Often I have been told, "You didn't tell us half the good there was in it". When my family and my friends urged me to look for this tempting position, I always answered that I was considering the *pros* and *cons*. Through all this time there was neither word nor sign from Plunkett.

Not so with Gill—he had been with me constantly, talking incessantly to me of the parts that the I.A.O.S. and the Department would play and how they would be interdependent on each other. I always listened with respect. He was older than I was and had far more experience. When Plunkett's appointment was announced, Gill had a long talk with me. Prior to that he had been in France and had written me rather extravagant letters as to



the heights to which the I.A.O.S. and I, its Secretary, could mount if only he were appointed Secretary to the new Department. So I knew beforehand what the talk was to be about. I listened to all Gill had to say and said nothing. Then he told me how he had been traduced to Plunkett by malignant people and asked me to use such influence as I possessed on his behalf. He told me I would never have cause to regret it. That the I.A.O.S. would have all the money and help it needed, given on the lines of the Recess Committee's Report. Then he made a bad break. He said, "Plunkett is a Protestant, so are you. It would *never* do to have two Protestants at the head of this new body which has to deal with a people who are predominantly Catholic." I said nothing, but that argument very nearly made me feel that I ought to look for this well-paid job as I had been urged to do by my relations and friends. Never, in all my career, had I cared a straw what religion any man professed. It meant nothing to me. But, who knows? Gill may have been right on that point. A few days afterwards, Plunkett came early to my office and seemed unusually reserved. After rather an awkward pause, he said to me, "Look here, you have the best right to the position of Secretary of the new Department, and it is my gift. If you say you want it, I will appoint you. But, I ought to explain to you that your position as a Civil Servant will be very different from that you now occupy. You will no longer be a free-lance. And you will have all manner of difficult negotiations with

Roman Catholic Bishops and educationalists and, of course, you have had no experience of that sort of thing." He was going on, but I stopped him. "Plunkett", said I, "why aren't you as frank with me now as you have been always? Why don't you, straight out, say you want to appoint 'T. P.'?" "Frankly", said he, "I think he'd fill the position better than you could. And, what would the I.A.O.S. do without you? You have made it what it is to-day." I said I was happy where I was, that I thought I'd make an indifferent and, possibly, an insubordinate Civil Servant, for I hated red tape and convention. And so I "burnt my boats", as far as the Civil Service was concerned.

When my decision was made known and Gill was appointed, the rage and indignation of my friends was unbounded. They said I was an idiot and said worse things about Plunkett. Naturally, I took full responsibility for my renunciation. But I had a pretty bad time.

Looking back on that incident now, I am convinced that I did the right thing. I should not have been a success as a Civil Servant if I had preserved my individuality. If I had abandoned that, I should have become a hide-bound official—efficient, perhaps, in the routine office work, but wholly unable to deal with many of the tortuous problems which presented themselves and with which Gill appeared to be able to grapple. Anyway, I did it for what I thought was best and I can honestly say that I have never regretted my decision.

On the 5th June 1901 I was the recipient of a very flattering and handsome testimonial contributed by the societies and my friends in the movement. The presentation was made by Horace Plunkett, and as in his speech he made a reference to the Secretaryship of the Department I think I may be permitted to quote it in justice to the memory of my old leader and dear friend, and also in justice to myself. He said:

“I pass now over the years of his life, about which you know all that I could tell you, to one more stage in which, if no definite sacrifice was made, he at least showed the spirit of self-sacrifice which has animated him throughout. I might, out of respect for Mr. Anderson’s feelings, avoid this delicate ground, but his career is public property and his position is affected by the circumstances I am about to relate. A new Department of State has recently been created. The exercise of patronage is always a dreary task, and, in my case, has been not without its inconveniences. It brings out the seamy side of human nature, but also some brighter aspects. If any man in Ireland had a claim to the offer of a permanent post with a provision for old age, it was the man who had had the unique experience of our friend. I frankly admitted this to him, but found, as I knew I should, that he was as true as ever to the noble mission to which he had devoted so many years of his life. He still felt, as indeed I did myself, that the movement which we inaugurated together was not yet in a position to dispense with services which everyone in this room, and those they represent, know to be irreplaceable. I must now make way for others who are just as anxious as I am to testify to Mr. Ander-

son's worth. In attempting to put before you the character and work of this public servant, I have not been led into a panegyric, but have spoken the sober truth. I have known many men of quicker intuition, and of a more subtle intellect, who have bounded into public favour behind a few speeches or by clever advertisement, men whom it has not taken a dozen years of unremitting toil to earn a testimonial from a grateful public. But the exact position which Mr. Anderson occupies in the public life of Ireland to-day is due to other qualities of heart and head. He is the centre of a band of practical idealists—the practical, in his case, predominating over the ideal. It may be that no two of us place these two elements of industrial and social progress in exactly the same relation to each other. But we all accord to Robert Anderson a high place amongst those who in diverse ways are struggling to improve the material and social condition of the Irish people, whom we all long to see living in comfort and contentment in their own land.”

I quote Horace Plunkett's generous tribute without apology—not from any desire to glorify my twelve years' work, but just to show what manner of man he was. He was too dead honest to do a “job”, and, while my appointment to this lucrative position might have been justified and while he truly desired to give it to me, he was convinced that he would not have acted wisely in so doing. Now, in my old age, I may be tempted to regret the loaves and fishes, but I have never questioned and do not now presume to question the propriety of his selection. Plunkett always set up high stand-

ards, to the utmost height of which he himself always aspired, and to most of which he fully attained. I can realise now that neither T. P. Gill, nor I, nor any man I could name, could possibly have achieved what virtually meant perfection.

I had counted on all that Gill had promised in the way of financial help to and co-operation with the I.A.O.S. Before long I was grievously disillusioned. Gill, always versatile, had become a bureaucrat of bureaucrats. He entrenched himself behind entanglements of red tape that would defy all but a storming party to pierce. The specious promises of his pre-secretarial days evaporated into lengthy explanations as to why this, that and the other could not be done. And, of course, right was always on his side. "The rules of the Public Service", and so forth, were invoked. And there was no Court of Appeal, for Plunkett had, most unfortunately, become almost as deeply enmeshed in red tape as his secretary. He made handsome amends. His salary was handed over to the I.A.O.S. every month as it was paid. But no money could compensate the I.A.O.S. for the, even temporary, change in Plunkett's outlook. While he was the last man I ever knew likely to be dazzled by the immense powers which he wielded as head of a great department of Government, embracing as it did not only the paramount industry of agriculture but also technical training in industries of all kinds, forestry and fisheries, with its huge staff of technical experts, inspectors, clerks and other officials, it was not wonderful that he should now and then

contrast the amateurish work of the I.A.O.S. and its small half-educated staff rather unfavourably with the precision and certainty with which his experts laid down the law. And as time went on Plunkett became more and more critical of what I and my associates were attempting. When friction arose, as it soon did, between the two bodies the blame was almost invariably laid upon us. This friction was intensified after Professor Campbell's appointment as Assistant Secretary in respect of agriculture, though it was not his fault. When he accepted the appointment he firmly believed that he had ready to his hand a co-operative organisation having its ramifications extending all over Ireland, and that the co-operative societies would prove the best possible *media* for putting into operation the schemes devised by his Branch. Shortly after he was installed, he and I had a long talk and he unfolded his ideas to me. The main idea was that, as soon as the Agricultural Branch had hatched out any scheme in any way affecting the societies, he, Campbell, to use his own words, "would press a button and Anderson would jump to attention and, in turn, press the buttons communicating with every society, which, in their turn, would do likewise and respond". It sounded delightfully simple. I ventured to remind him that this method did not accord with the principles laid down in the Report of the Recess Committee as summarised in the last paragraph of Horace Plunkett's covering letter to the Chief Secretary, which ran as follows:

“In conclusion, I ask you, in judging of our recommendations, to bear in mind our reliance upon individual and combined effort rather than on State aid. In asking for the latter we have throughout attached the utmost importance to its *being granted in such a manner as to evoke and supplement the former*; and if, at the outset, we appear to give undue prominence to the capabilities of State initiation, it must be remembered that we are dealing with economic conditions which have been artificially produced, and may, therefore, require exceptional treatment of a temporary nature to bring about a permanent remedy.” (The italics are mine.)

I said it appeared to me that Campbell was putting the cart before the horse; that what we in the I.A.O.S. really wanted was assistance to organise the farmers and to instruct them in the management and business of their societies, and that, until then, they could not be expected to provide effective agencies for the promotion of the Department's schemes. I said I believed that, as soon as our co-operative organisation work had been perfected and the societies we formed were working safely and efficiently, they would be found exactly what the Department needed and that they would gladly avail themselves of all the aid and advice the Department could give them in furtherance of their own voluntary efforts. Campbell had expected something quite different—a disciplined, trained and effective co-operative movement—instead of which it was pretty clear that he regarded our efforts with something bordering on contempt. And

yet it was this amateurish attempt at co-operative organisation, carried out in the face of extraordinary difficulties, that had been the parent of the Department in which he held one of the most important positions.

Gill had played a prominent part in the direction of the I.A.O.S. work during the year preceding the passing of the Agricultural and Technical Instruction Act. Up to that time we had been content with the work of organisation. Gill persuaded the I.A.O.S. Committee to use a large part of an unexpected windfall to employ a staff of experts. So we appointed experts in barley-growing, in poultry-keeping, egg-grading and packing, in fruit-growing, in horticulture, in bee-keeping and in home industries. The work done by these experts was, in the main, sound. It is fully recorded in the Report of the I.A.O.S. for the year 1899. I remember well the drafting of this Report. I, of course, made the first draft. Then Gill got it and amended it, first in red ink, then in blue ink, then in purple ink, and finally in green. I only wish this draft had been preserved. Little of my unimaginative and uninspiring MS. remained, except the statistics. Gill displayed in his amendments an ingenuity and dexterity, as well as a spaciousness and wealth of imagination, which filled me with admiration. Never was a job of "window-dressing" better performed! My only fear was that Gill had exaggerated the value of the work done by the I.A.O.S. experts. He certainly did not underestimate it. Beyond doubt, this somewhat flamboyant document helped



to hasten the setting up of the Department, though of course its establishment was the direct outcome of the Report of the Recess Committee.

Messrs. Guinness assisted the I.A.O.S. in providing the services of the barley-growing expert and expressed their high appreciation of his experimental work. Another of our expert staff, a Dane, impressed his mark on the poultry societies in teaching them to purchase the eggs by weight rather than by count, in testing them for freshness, in grading them and in the most up-to-date methods of packing for market.

It is difficult, if not impossible, in recounting my experiences to set down each happening in its proper sequence, and so I feel bound to apologise to those who may read these pages for the somewhat jerky character of the narrative, which does not lend itself easily to continuity.

As the kindly Bishop said to Father John, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. Gill is dead. I think he was a good official and did his duty conscientiously. But my duty is to record my impressions of things that happened in my time, and not to withhold blame where it was merited. Gill's failure to mention the extent to which distributive co-operation in Denmark had spread in that country at the time of his report to the Recess Committee was a sin of omission which I cannot forgive. His motive in withholding this information was doubtless to disarm opposition from traders, and he achieved his immediate object of concentrating thought on the necessity for agricultural co-operation, pure and

simple. That report of his on Denmark was to lay the foundation of the policy advocated by the Recess Committee which was subsequently to become the policy of the new Department of Agriculture, of the Congested Districts Board, and, even in its first stages, of the Development Commissioners in their earlier dealings with the I.A.O.S. It also provided T. W. Russell afterwards with the best material for his diatribes against the I.A.O.S. for prosecuting a "cruel war against traders". But that was not his only sin against the body which had given him his great opportunity in life. The body of "experts"—mostly excellent men and as efficient as could have been found in those days—which he had induced the I.A.O.S. to employ in order to perfect the case for a Department of Agriculture, were only very reluctantly and grudgingly subsidised, as to expenses only and not as to salaries, by the Department while that body was manning its multifarious expert staffs. When their possibly crude efforts came up for criticism by the Department, which was frequently the case, there was no word from Gill in their favour, and ultimately this little band of pioneer "experts", who had really done fine work, were allowed to disappear into private life without either reward or encomium. From the purely expert and technical point of view this was possibly justifiable. But, when it came to the Department criticising the organising work of the I.A.O.S., work carried out under great and perfectly well-known difficulties—when I was charged

with "dotting the map" (we had a big map of Ireland, on the fair face of which we stuck a coloured circle to show the *locus* of each new society)—when, with that stated object in view, it was said in the Department that "Anderson's orders to his staff were 'Scatter yourselves and draw your pay'" —my patience, already worn threadbare, went altogether and I blazed out in hot and really virtuous indignation. Gill at first listened and uttered platitudes. Then he pulled his Henri Quatre beard and yawned. When Campbell was called in, things became more acrimonious. So, in desperation, I used to appeal to Caesar. Plunkett was always patient, and, up to a certain point, sympathetic. But I could see that this friction between the I.A.O.S. and the Department was a real grief to him and even a bore. It had been borne in on his mind that I was the "Mother Carey's chicken" who brought storm into the peaceful waters of Upper Merrion Street. When I came to him boiling over with rage he used to admonish me, gently but firmly. And so it came about that I never went to the Department unless I was sent for, and then very unwillingly. I realised that we had bartered such freedom as we had for the Department's subsidy. As the Department paid the piper, so it asserted the right to call the tune, even if the *motif* of that tune was co-operation. Relations grew more and more strained until, for some time, there was no longer speech between Campbell and me. I don't think it was his fault; he had not understood the true position of affairs

which Gill should have made clear to him at the outset. Then Plunkett was seized with the idea of bringing Campbell and me together on the golf links at Lahinch for a week-end, and, unaware previously of his intention, we met. Another hapless official of the Department made up that doleful quartette. I was partnered with Campbell in a foursome against Plunkett and the other victim of this tragic experiment at restoring an *entente*. Not one word did my dour partner exchange with me while we fozzled through an interminable eighteen-hole match. It was even so at dinner-time and yet after, when the strings of tongues are usually unloosed at a golfing hotel. The experiment was a fiasco. I must accept my share of blame for its failure, though I honestly desired peace. I was dead sick of fighting for what I conceived to be our rights; I was almost sick enough of it all to feel like throwing up my position. The one thing that restrained me was that I felt in my bones that Plunkett would yet escape from the Department's spell and might need the help of his old associates in the I.A.O.S., as indeed he afterwards did.

## CHAPTER IX

The Council of Agriculture—The I.A.O.S.  
Grant is withdrawn

AN essential feature of the Department was the Council of Agriculture. Its functions were purely consultative and advisory. It consisted of more than 100 members, of whom I was one. Its debates were often very interesting and not without value, for its membership included many very able men, and it was probably as good a debating society as could have been devised. Plunkett's addresses were always extremely good and were listened to with the utmost respect and attention. It was a well-disciplined body and everybody obeyed the Chair, but it always seemed to me that its proceedings were just an orderly formality. I cannot call to mind a single instance of a resolution emanating from the Department—as most did—having been rejected or even drastically amended. All were passed as originally drafted practically as a matter of course. I wondered whether this was quite healthy. It seemed so unlike any body of Irishmen of that size and of so varied a composition to exhibit such an unusual unanimity that I began to speculate as to whether, under another Vice-President, the gathering would not act

exactly in the same way; and, in truth, the complaisance which had been exhibited under Plunkett's Vice-Presidency did not disappear or diminish when T. W. Russell succeeded him. The Council proved as biddable and docile under "T. W." as it had been under his predecessor, even to the length of rescinding its own resolutions under the previous administration.

We did not often have a laugh in that rather solemn assembly. But I remember one. The Albert Institution at Glasnevin had been taken over by the Department and was being reorganised, properly equipped and properly furnished for the students. The Members of the Council had been invited to visit the institution and see the work which had been done. One clerical gentleman, who had a perennial grievance against the Department, was amongst the visiting party. At the next meeting of the Council he rose solemnly and denounced the Department for its extravagant expenditure on lavatories and sanitary accommodation as being far beyond the needs or requirements of the students. He entered into a wealth of detail in describing the luxurious places of retirement. I could see Gill, with whom his reverence was especially at war, getting angrier and angrier. He almost rose to refute the attack but was restrained by the gentle hand of the Vice-President. Then good William Field, M.P., got up and looked round the meeting with an impish smile on his face, "Mr. Vice-President", said he, "St. Thomas à Kempis tells us that 'there are *some* things which are better done

in secret'." Then he sat down and the meeting roared with laughter. There was no more popular man in the Council than William Field, and I believe his popularity was even greater in Parliament. He could fight his corner when fighting was necessary, but he was essentially a man of peace and sound common sense. On top of it all, he had a delightful sense of humour.

Co-operation was often discussed, but rather in the abstract, at Council meetings and, as there were many traders and politicians in its membership, the extremely thin ice of "controversial" co-operation had to be skated over discreetly and warily. However, during Plunkett's time, the various grants to the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society in aid of its work were always sanctioned. I think the traders and politicians realised the wisdom, from their point of view, in continuing to subsidise the Society out of public funds in order that the Department might be in a position to prevent any incursions into the forbidden domain of co-operative stores. All the out-and-out co-operators, including myself, chafed at this restraint.

With the coming of T. W. Russell, all of us co-operators, who had been nominated by the Department, were summarily removed from the Council of Agriculture and our places filled by adherents of the new Vice-President. The grant to the I.A.O.S. was first drastically cut down and then entirely withdrawn. The Council acquiesced. Its subsequent proceedings interested me no more.

I do not know if it would have been possible to have endowed the Council with some real power, or even, if it had been possible, whether it would have been wise. But it always seemed to me that it was rather a useless part of the Department's machinery. It differed widely from the General Meeting of the I.A.O.S., which not only elected the Committee and officers, but also directed the policy of the Society. If the I.A.O.S. Committee failed to carry out any resolution of the General Meeting, more would be heard about it. And because our General Meetings were fully conscious of their power, they used it with discretion and moderation.

It is interesting now to recall the two resolutions adopted by the Council of Agriculture by overwhelming majorities in 1906. They were as follows:

*16th May.* "That in the opinion of the Council, it is desirable that the Department should promote agricultural organisation and provide the funds necessary for the purpose."

*27th November.* "This meeting of the Council, having regard to the unanimous resolution of the Council meeting of 16th May, expressing the opinion that it is desirable that the Department should promote agricultural organisation, and provide the funds necessary for the purpose, recommends that the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, which is the only existing body having a special knowledge of this work, should be aided in carrying out an approved Scheme of agricultural organisation, subject to effective supervision of all expenditure in connection therewith by the Department and, that with a view to stimulating



contributions from societies and subscribers, and thus securing greater economy as well as evoking a greater measure of local effort, the subsidy granted by the Department should be in the form of a *pro rata* contribution."

The latter resolution was adopted shortly before Plunkett vacated the position of Vice-President of the Department, which the Liberal Government, then in office, insisted on his retaining for two years, to the great chagrin of Russell, while the Committee of Enquiry into the working of the Department was conducting its investigations. The findings of that Committee amply vindicated Plunkett's administration and so proved very disappointing to his critics.

T. W. Russell was then appointed and, having swept the Council of Agriculture free from any taint of "controversial" co-operation, he proceeded to get that pliant body to rescind their former resolutions. In December 1907, Plunkett having replaced Nugent Everard as President of the I.A.O.S., T. W. Russell announced that the subsidy from the Department to the Society would be reduced to £3000 for 1908, £2000 for 1909 and £1000 for 1910, after which it would cease altogether.

A resolution was unanimously adopted at the Annual General Meeting of the Society accepting the Department's terms and deciding to "at once take steps to raise funds to continue the work of co-operative organisation on a basis of independence of departmental control". In seconding the

motion for the adoption of the Report at that meeting, the Vice-President, Father Finlay, said: "He congratulated the Conference that day on the feeling which, he believed, all of them had that they were breathing a new atmosphere. They had passed through a period in which their liberty of action had been restricted by the circumstances under which their work was done. There were many of them who, at the outset of that period, held the view that it was a mistake—a radical mistake—to have entered into such an alliance with any Government Department which involved not merely the payment out of public funds for their work, but also involved the control which such a subsidy naturally brought with it. Their movement began as a self-help movement, and many of them believed that its prospects and its fortunes would have been brighter, even if its resources had been more restricted, if it had remained perseveringly and unfailingly a self-help movement." This statement was received with great applause. Then up rose Hugh de F. Montgomery, who stated that he disapproved profoundly of what the Vice-President had said. He "considered that the presence of the representatives of the Department had been of immense service to the Committee and to the movement. He had seen no traces or colour of red tape at all. He had not seen a single case in which the representatives of the Department had hampered the action of the Committee in any illegitimate way. He regretted the action of the Vice-President of the Department in with-

drawing the subsidy, and he regretted it all the more because it would bring this excellent arrangement to an end, and weaken the authority of the two representatives of the Department who were the men, more than any other men on the Committee, to put things on the right lines."

To explain Montgomery's attitude it is necessary to describe the man.

Picture to yourselves a man of fine presence and stature, always standing stark and erect. He seemed to have stepped straight out of the frame of one of his Cromwellian ancestors' portraits. In politics he was nominally a Liberal, but a more thorough-going Conservative of the "die-hard" breed I never met. Hugh Montgomery, hating and despising all Southerners as "Fenians", and therefore consigning them to the rope, curiously allied himself with the Catholic-Nationalist T. P. Gill. In matters appertaining to the I.A.O.S. the two were *Arcades ambo* and they plotted and schemed together. I fancy that it began this way: While Gill was editing the, then, moribund *Dublin Daily Express*, he sought contributions on matters of local or national interest to fill his arid sheets. All was fish that came to his editorial net. Montgomery contributed articles about Clogher Valley Railway, in county Tyrone, of which he was Chairman. Nobody down south cared one straw about the little, tin-pot, narrow-gauge line. But Montgomery's contribution provided a text for Gill's leading articles. Thus must this strange alliance have begun. But, stranger still, it persisted,

and on the rare occasions when a vote had to be taken on any subject in the I.A.O.S. Committee, Gill and Montgomery were always to be found in the same lobby. One can only charitably surmise that the ancestry of the Gills had, in the past, been crossed by some Cromwellian strain and that "T. P." had periods when he became a throw-back to that strange mixture of breeds. Gill was a native of North Tipperary, where many soldiers in the Cromwellian army settled and were absorbed into the most rebellious in Ireland. Be this as it may, Montgomery and he continued to hunt in couples.

Montgomery was steeped in the lore of German co-operative organisation and regarded himself as a high authority on the subject. In the presence of Father Finlay, who, not alone knew as much more about agricultural co-operation in Germany but also understood, far better than Montgomery, the psychology of the German co-operators, he was less prone to dogmatise. Later, when Henry W. Wolff joined our ranks and enriched us with his vast store of knowledge gathered from every country in which agricultural co-operation had succeeded, Montgomery realised that he had met his master. Wolff was able to demolish Montgomery's pet theories and did so, mercilessly. But the disgust of Montgomery was immense when Wolff declared in public that Horace Plunkett had unconsciously hit on the plan of all others which was best for Ireland. I used to watch him, curling his lip in proud disdain, while his pale-blue eyes

were fixed coldly on any of us who referred to the spiritual side of the movement. He was intensely materialistic in his outlook. To him co-operation was nothing more than a highly organised system of business in which sentiment had no place. Material success was all he valued, and the "making of character" was to him pure moonshine. It was a strange obsession for a man who had had many opportunities of studying, on the spot, the great work of Raiffeisen, probably the purest and truest form of co-operation in the world. But Raiffeisenism had no attraction for him, although he was bound to admit its marvellous success.

I think what stirred the bile of Hugh Montgomery most deeply of all was the writing of George Russell (A. E.) in the *Irish Homestead*. It vexed his spirit sorely and occasionally he would break out in contemptuous wrath and refer scornfully to its attempts to promote Ceilidhes ("whatever *they* may mean"). He addressed a long memorandum to the Committee, advising that the *Homestead* should be Prussianised and made "practical". Fortunately, he found himself in a minority of one, Gill then having gone to the Department of Agriculture.

At one time I have no manner of doubt but that he aspired to the position of "Herr Direktor" of the I.A.O.S. That was shortly after the setting up of the Department of Agriculture. While he was always, personally, quite friendly to me, he made no secret of his contempt for my lack of education and my limited abilities. One morning he came to

my office and said he would like to have a talk with me. I agreed, and we sat by the fire and smoked. He began thus: "You know, Anderson, this co-operative work (I believe you call it 'movement') needs a big man at its head now that Horace Plunkett has gone to the Department. You could do useful work in a subordinate capacity, but you must realise that you are not big enough for this job." I replied that I was only too conscious of my many shortcomings but that I was doing my best, and, after all, had had some measure of success, even in Ulster. I added that I thought it would be extremely difficult to find a man in whom were combined all the qualities necessary to constitute him a successful director of a movement such as ours in a country like Ireland. "There *is* such a man", he replied, looking gravely at me with his cold, light-blue eyes. "*Not* Hugh de Fellenberg Montgomery!" I said. He poked the fire and replied over his shoulder, "and why not?" I did not so much mind his sneers at myself and my shortcomings, but his insolent assumption of superiority filled me with mingled amusement and anger. "*You*", I said. "*You!* If you had been obliged to begin where I began, with your scorn for all Southerners, your alien nature, your contempt for all that we hold best in our work, your infernal Prussian ideas, you would not have started a single society and you, yourself, would have remained in obscurity as Chairman of the Clogher Valley Railway, for there would have been no I.A.O.S. and, therefore, no platform for you to pontificate from.

The work you despise, performed by my colleagues and myself, in spite of all hardships and difficulties—many of which we can thank you for—has given you a chance to do a man's part in helping Horace Plunkett if it were not for your infernal conceit. When the Committee tell me to go, I shall go, but I shall never stand down at your bidding." I suppose he was surprised and rather scared at my outburst. I had always listened politely to his talk about German co-operation, even when his superior manner got my back up, and he must have thought that I would receive his amazing proposal in the same spirit. There were things about the man that I liked, his honesty and earnestness were beyond question.

The interview was at an end, and I heard no more of his pretensions, though I have reason to believe that he continued to cherish them until he resigned his seat on the Committee.

It was not until years afterwards that I told Plunkett of this conversation. He was indignant at the slight that had been offered me, and smiled at the idea of Montgomery as Director or, rather, Dictator. But evidently he had his reservations, for he remarked that "Montgomery was a very honest man."

## CHAPTER X

The Department's Representatives on I.A.O.S.  
Committee—Inevitable Friction—Plunkett dis-  
illusioned

IN the year 1904 Professor Campbell had been co-opted a member of our Committee to represent the Department, and the following year Mr. T. S. Porter, one of the Department's inspectors, was also added to it. It was clear from the outset that the Department's two representatives and Hugh Montgomery saw eye to eye with each other. Hitherto the Committee had relied very much on the advice which I was invariably asked to give; now, however, every opinion expressed by me was challenged by one or other of the triumvirate. I should not have minded if they had been right, but it was plain that Montgomery wanted to Prussianise the movement and the Department's two representatives desired to curb the initiative of the organising staff, thus depriving them of what was in reality their chief value. Montgomery made no secret of his opinions of me and of the staff. He was nothing if not frank. All this, irritating as it was, might have been endured, but, when it came about that a system of espionage had actually been introduced, I found it hard to control the frayed tempers of my small staff. The monthly expenses



and diaries of the organisers, my own included, were subjected to rigorous examination and criticism, so that much of our time was taken up by explanations as to why a telegram rather than a letter was sent, or why an organiser hired a car when there was a railway (but no suitable train!). The whole Irish Agricultural Organisation Society staff flared up when it was discovered that an official at £1000 a year salary, and first-class expenses, had dogged the itinerary of one of our most trustworthy and zealous organisers, whose humble pay was £250, with third-class expenses, to verify his record of societies visited and inns slept in. Apart from the miserable meanness of this proceeding, the waste of public funds on such sleuth-hunting was a scandal. It was with the greatest difficulty that I prevailed on my aggrieved colleague to withhold the letter of resignation which he had written. I relate this incident to illustrate the nature of the pin-pricking which we, in the I.A.O.S., had to endure. It killed all our enthusiasm and rendered us bitter and almost revengeful. Our integrity had been meanly assailed for the first time and by officials who owed their positions, mainly, to the work my colleagues and I had done. If Gill were aware of these proceedings, he gave no sign. Plunkett, I am sure, was not, but before long he was to learn what a burden had been placed on us.

At last Plunkett's eyes were rudely opened. He was in the Chair at a Committee meeting and had himself proposed a very modest increase in salary to a hard-working and most deserving member of

the staff. I think it was Father Finlay who seconded the motion. Thereupon Campbell and Porter objected and said the Committee had no right to depart from the scale of expenditure laid down in our annual budget. Plunkett was first amazed and then exceedingly angry in finding a trifling expenditure proposed by himself actually vetoed by two members of his late staff who, by the way, while he had been at the head of the Department, had been detailed for service as watch-dogs to curb the expenditure of the irresponsible I.A.O.S. Committee. I must confess that the incident filled me with unholy joy. At last the Plunkett gander was to taste the bitterness of the sauce which had been served to the Anderson goose! It was not till then that he realised the great mistake that had been made by imposing official control on the voluntary body he had founded. It had wellnigh killed all co-operative spirit and enthusiasm in us who formed its staff. It had destroyed all the initiative which had resulted in its remarkable progress, for we had no longer a free hand. All proposals for new developments had to be submitted to two officials for sanction before they might be undertaken, to two men who, whatever their official ability might be, knew little or nothing about co-operation.

All along I had feared this result and had foreseen it. But Plunkett could not imagine it possible that such a state of things would arise between the two bodies which he had virtually founded—the voluntary I.A.O.S. and the Official Depart-

ment of Agriculture. He fondly imagined that the spirit which had been breathed in the pages of the Recess Committee's Report animated not only the I.A.O.S. but also the Department. He had been told that it was my stubbornness that had led to all the friction. I know I was stubborn, and I do not regret it. I could see no good in a State-controlled I.A.O.S. which would be virtually an outside branch of the Department which subsidised it. Another circumstance which made me antagonistic to the arrangement was that the contributions from the societies showed an alarming tendency to shrink. It was realised by them that a very large proportion of the I.A.O.S. income was derived from public funds, and people, not unnaturally, began to ask why the societies should subscribe more than their bare affiliation fees so as to preserve their membership in the parent body. It had been admitted on all hands that the education of the farmer had been neglected, also that a very large proportion of the I.A.O.S. work was of an educational character and, as such, ought to be paid for by the State. But this fact was wholly ignored.

To-day I find myself in complete agreement with the sentiments of Father Finlay in the speech which is quoted elsewhere, that we would have done better to struggle on without any State grants even though we might have to tighten our belts. But it must never be forgotten that much was expected from the I.A.O.S. by the Department and much demanded in return for the grant,

and that in order that we might do what was required we were literally forced to accept large subsidies, always with the assurance that we should be left free to do our own work in our own way. If that "gentleman's agreement" had been adhered to, all friction might have been avoided—friction that was deadly to the spirit of the I.A.O.S. and highly detrimental to the Department. Even so, I think that subsidies, given as they were, proved bad for the morale of the I.A.O.S. and the whole movement. For a time, at my earnest solicitation, they were made *pro rata* to the independent income of the I.A.O.S. This was less objectionable and even served to stimulate societies to increase their contributions. The plan was, however, abandoned and in its place was substituted a system under which the I.A.O.S. had to prepare a scheme of work in advance for each year with a budget of estimated receipts and expenditure. To do this with any degree of accuracy was next to an impossibility; the estimated income might be more or less accurately forecasted, but in a growing movement like ours, with all sorts of unexpected developments, it was not possible to estimate the expenditure, even approximately. This plan, which was evidently the outcome of a Treasury clerk's suggestion, proved utterly unworkable. Even the estimate of income was rarely correct, and there were, constantly, cases where new developments were called for, for which no provision had been made, and for the carrying out of which the sanction of the Department's representatives had to be

obtained. It was over such cases that serious friction arose.

There is but one way in which the State can really assist a body like the I.A.O.S. with grants. The body that is to be subsidised must first satisfy the State that its work is of sufficient value to merit assistance, and, when that has been agreed upon, the agreed amount should be paid and the subsidised body allowed to carry on its work without let or hindrance; subject, of course, to the audit of its accounts. This is the plan followed where grants are made to universities and other educational institutions, with whose internal affairs the State does not and cannot interfere.

## CHAPTER XI

We visit the United States—Unbounded Hospitality but few Dollars—A Multi-millionaire in his Office—Another At Home—The Orator's "Help"

TOWARDS the autumn of 1903 the chronic impecuniosity of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society had become acute. Plunkett had made hosts of friends in the United States, many of them rich and very influential. As a matter of fact his name was almost better known and his fine work better appreciated there than they were in his native country. An association called the "Irish Industrial Society of America" had been founded by that good friend of the movement, Mr. James Byrne, a prominent New York lawyer, with another staunch friend, Judge Martin J. Keogh, as its President. This Society invited the I.A.O.S. to send over a deputation to try to secure some financial aid. I disliked the idea of the mission; Ireland had sent too many sturdy beggars already across the Atlantic, and moreover I doubted my efficiency as a mendicant. While I knew the cause was a worthy one, it seemed to me to be rather shameful to ask other than our own people to provide the funds necessary for an organisation which should have been amply endowed at home. Father

Finlay, Father O'Donovan and I were deputed to go.

Father "Jerry" O'Donovan was a prominent and most engaging member of the I.A.O.S. Committee. To his intimate friends he was always known as "Jerry" O'Donovan, a genial and attractive personality. He was an ardent supporter of our movement and a very strenuous worker for it. His popularity was great, for he was irresistible in his gay geniality. But he had a very serious side to him, too. Once I was staying with him at Loughrea, and on a Sunday afternoon we walked into the country. We came upon a funeral at an ancient graveyard, overhanging the road, which had been cut away to ease the levels until it almost seemed that the rotting coffins might discharge their grim remains on to the highway. No priest attended, and Father Jerry and I together entered God's acre and took our places in the sad assemblage. There was a pause while he sent a boy to the house of the priest who lived near by to borrow the clerical insignia with which a Catholic priest must be equipped when he commits a body to the earth. He then conducted the graveside service. It was unintelligible to me, being in Latin; but it was perfectly understood by the mourners—too poor to secure for their dead the attendance of the resident pastor. We slipped away amid the whispered blessings of the gathering on the kindly act which had been performed by Father Jerry. It had been by things like this that he had won the hearts of the people. All hoped, young as he was, that he would be the next Bishop,

and I believe he was actually the selected candidate by the priesthood of the diocese. However, that distinction was not conferred upon him. While he remained in Ireland he worked for the movement with unabated zeal and attracted to it such local magnates as the late Earl of Westmeath, the late Edward Martyn, of Tulyra (the hero of the Kildare Street Club attempted eviction and subsequent ostracism), and the late Lady Gregory, of Coole Park, the noted "Abbey" playwright. For Father Jerry was *persona grata* with rich and poor, gentle and simple. All the rest is "another story".

Some time previous to our departure, in November, Viscount Ikerrin, afterwards the Earl of Carrick, then an inspector in the Department of Agriculture, had been appointed as *liaison* officer between that body and the I.A.O.S. He was a man of sound sense and of kindly disposition and his advent brought about a very much better atmosphere and understanding. Before leaving, I commended to him the care of my office and staff, and during my absence he kept strict watch and ward over both.

Father Finlay having left previously, O'Donovan and I crossed the Atlantic in the *Oceanic*, said to be the most beautiful liner that ever entered New York harbour. She was a "lively" ship and a pretty fast one. The weather was boisterous but never too bad for me, except on one occasion. I had gone on board with a bad throat and it bothered me. Our kindly surgeon, poor O'Loghlen, who went down with the *Titanic* on her maiden trip,



said he'd cauterise it for me. So I wended my way forward to where he had his surgery, right near the bows. The *Oceanic* was boring her way through big grey rollers, great chunks of which came crashing on to the decks, and I began to feel unhappy. In the surgery were O'Loghlen and Russell, the genial and robust purser, who, alas, shared the fate of his kindly messmate, for he, too, was lost with the *Titanic*. O'Loghlen produced a stick of caustic and fixed it, none too firmly, it seemed to me, in a pair of forceps. With this rather dubious contraption he proceeded to cauterise my throat while the great ship flung her bows high in the air and then burrowed through the next wave. I was in mortal terror lest the caustic should become unshipped and slip down my gullet. It was a horrid experience and I felt nearer to sea-sickness than I ever did on the Atlantic. However, the thing was done and O'Loghlen exhibited the insecurely attached piece of caustic to reassure me. The good purser produced a stiff drink which he bade me swallow. "You'll need that", said he, "now that you are through with O'Loghlen."

Arrived in New York harbour, O'Donovan and I, while yet on board, received invitations to dinner that night from Mrs. George Wickersham, whose husband was a member of the U.S.A. Ministry. I thanked her for having singled us out for such hospitality. But the good lady rather startled me by saying, "Don't make any mistake. *You* haven't been singled out. This is only ordinary American politeness." All the same, her great

kindness belied the brusqueness of her words. Yet I came to realise that it was so indeed. Never have I been so overwhelmed with effortless, spontaneous, unostentatious hospitality. I was made free of the most exclusive clubs in New York, a couple at least, for each week, so that I might have a change. I need never have dined at my hotel, for invitations to dine were showered upon me. I could lunch every day, if I wished, either at the "down-town" or "up-town" Delmonicos, or at Sherry's, in Fifth Avenue, also, frequently, at the "down-town" clubs, frequented by the business men. There I tasted, but did not finish, a plate of "clam broth". It seemed to me to be like soap-suds. I ate Buzzard Bay oysters, which were said to be superior to Blue Points, but, in my perverted, insular judgment, far inferior to our Red Banks. The canvas-back duck was good, but no better than any mallard I have brought down with my gun. Once, I confess, I was really taken aback. I lunched at a palatial club, the name of which escapes me, on Thanksgiving Day. The waiters were all negroes and wore white cotton gloves. The *pièce de resistance* was roast turkey with cranberry sauce. I was hungry and did myself well. I asked for my bill. My burly and dusky servitor bowed and showed his fine set of teeth. "There is *no* charge, sah; this is Thanksgiving Day." When I contrast this with the starchy snobbery of London clubs or with the pinchbeck snobbery of the Dublin clubs, which ape them, I feel ashamed. But in those piping times of peace America was rich, rich

almost beyond the dreams of avarice. Visitors to her shores were expected, nay, compelled, to keep in line. The bedroom attendant who brought you your morning cup of tea expected and got his "quarter". And so through all the incidents of the day. One thing I noticed: the men I lunched or dined with rarely drank anything except Poland Water, or Apollinaris. Perhaps unwisely I stuck to my whiskey peg, even when it had to be Bourbon. Champagne was invariably produced at dinner, but was partaken of sparingly by Americans. The Poland Water and Apollinaris seemed to satisfy them.

I had come to America on more serious business than to make a study of New York clubs or its social life and I threw myself into it with a will. At first I seemed to be pushing open doors, for I called on Plunkett's personal friends earliest. In every case I secured a donation, more or less liberal. Then I thought I'd try rich men of Irish parentage or Irish birth who had worked their way up from the bottom. Such men, I argued with myself, will certainly be glad to give liberal aid to our organisation once they understand its objects. Never had I made such a mistake. At best my outpourings were listened to with cold politeness; at other times with impatient glancing at watch; in no case with any result in cash. One old savage, a multi-millionaire, so illiterate that he could barely write his name, drove me with curses from his palatial office. "Let them stay in Ireland and starve and be damned!" he shouted. "Why can't

they come out here and do as I have done?" Not all the well-to-do men of Irish descent were so ill-mannered. It was only when a man had begun with nothing and had by sheer grit, or by less reputable means, amassed his pile that I was met with jibes and bitter sneers. I have been called a "shameless beggar" by one such self-made, or graft-made, plutocrat, and, in spite of the righteousness of the cause I was pleading, I almost felt that I merited the appellation.

I had an introduction to Andrew Carnegie and was bidden by him to lunch at his great mansion up beyond the Central Park. That very morning the dire news had reached Wall Street of the collapse of the Steel Trust. I went down town to see for myself how people took it. Such a sight met my eyes, such sounds of woe were heard on every side! Old men, bare-headed, moved about listlessly, despair in their faces. Old women, who had lost their all, were almost frenzied with grief. The cruel cold of a New York winter was at hand and their lives' savings and hoardings gone. It was a tragic, a heart-rending spectacle. I thought at first that I had better send a telephone message to the creator of the collapsed trust, excusing myself from accepting his invitation; on second thoughts I considered it better to go and offer my condolences. So I repaired to the Carnegie mansion where I found my gnome-like little host in animated conversation with the Austrian Ambassador and another notability. I ventured to offer my condolences and to say that the news

must have been a great shock to him. The little man replied serenely, "Oh, not at all, I assure you. *I* held nothing but First Mortgage Bonds". I was glad to escape from this atmosphere of heartlessness and cynicism as soon as I could do so with decency. All through lunch the old multi-millionaire chattered in senile garrulity about a sitting he had had with his dentist. Not one word of pity for Schwab's poor victims! I suppose it is only such men who can amass vast fortunes out of which they effect what have been aptly described as "fire insurances" as a safeguard in the other world.

O'Donovan and I were bidden to a banquet given, I think, by the "Knights of Columbus". There I met Bourke Cochran, a man with an enormous head and an equally enormous reputation for oratory. O'Donovan and I had been told we would have an opportunity of pleading the cause of the I.A.O.S. But Cochran was on his legs before us and for an hour held forth about the age-long wrongs of his beloved country (he was a Sligo man). At the end of his long crescendo came a flood of tears from the orator's eyes which actually marred the perfection of his dress shirt. The audience were spellbound by this master of spellbinders. O'Donovan and I were utterly disgusted. I am convinced that Cochran did not wish us to have a hearing, a conviction which was strengthened by the fact that when, subsequently, he heard that Father Finlay and I were to speak at a meeting in Newark, New Jersey, he announced his intention of attending the meeting in order to "help" us.

He came, accompanied by two musical ladies. He spoke much as he had done at the banquet, and his two fair friends wasted the time and patience of the meeting with their musical interludes. I was "snowed under", but Father Finlay managed to deliver a brief but effective speech. Cochran was a lawyer and a politician, of what special brand I cannot say. Anyway, it seemed clear that he regarded the intrusion of the I.A.O.S. emissaries as a thing not to be encouraged. Long afterwards he was Plunkett's guest at Kilteragh with his wife, and reminded me how he had helped our American mission!

Various meetings were arranged for us, but were poorly attended and without much result. One, in particular, I remember was in the largest hall in New York; I cannot recall its name. As I was going in I was introduced to Mr. John Devoy. His first remark to me was, "Well, I suppose you expected to meet something with horns and hoofs? I hate Plunkett's politics, but I believe in his work and wish it well." I suppose he attended the meeting, but the audience was so sparse and scattered that it only made the vast hall appear more empty. However, the Press had to get something, so we spoke as well as we could in those depressing surroundings. I had got to know that strange bird of freedom, the American pressman. When I was dressing for dinner, the night of my arrival, three of these worthies invaded my bedroom at the Albemarle. None of them appeared to write shorthand, but all smoked and appeared anxious that

I should explain myself and my mission. I tried to be concise, courteous and truthful. Next morning I read all I did *not* say, embellished with observations about my personal appearance. Thereafter, I found it prudent to put my views on paper and hand it to the representative of the most reputable journal in the bunch. That, at all events, ensured at least one truthful report.

I had one game of golf while I was in New York, at Ardsley-on-Hudson. On the way there we passed the Palisades, high cliffs covered with maple and other trees. The "Indian summer" had stretched well into November and I have never seen such a marvellous display of colour all along those cliffs. On the golf-course I was fooled by the clearness of the air and was constantly under-clubbing myself, taking a mashie where I should have taken an iron and an iron where the brassie was the appropriate club. All the putting-greens were, even in those days, closely bunkered. Years afterwards I was able to entertain my host, an ex-Minister of State, to a return match at Dollymount, of which links he expressed his warm admiration.

Our efforts had only resulted in cash to the tune of about £1500, mostly contributed by Plunkett's personal friends. The mission had been a frost and I felt that the sooner I returned the better. So Father Finlay and I set sail in the *Oceanic* once more. Before we left, winter had set in and there had been a heavy fall of snow. Our ship was not then fitted with radiators, or they may not have been working. She had been lying some days in

dock, and I do not think I ever felt any cold so intense as that in my state-room. It took some courage to creep into an icy boiled shirt and dinner clothes. Our voyage back was uneventful until we approached Queenstown. I had noticed a big, over-dressed man, who was generally accompanied by a woman to match. It was he who always organised the sweep on the daily run of the ship. He played poker in the smoking-room all day and every day with all and sundry. I noticed that both Russell, the purser, and O'Loghlen the doctor, used to watch him. I had had a sandwich and a drink in the smoking-room, quite near the table where this man was playing poker with some younger men, who seemed rather excited, while he kept perfectly cool. I went on deck to seek some fresh air and there met Father Finlay. In a few minutes there was a hubbub below and soon emerged the calm poker player, calm no longer, but with crumpled shirt and collar and blood streaming from his face. Hot on his heels came the young men, and also his lady friend. They denounced him as a cheat and swindler and he was led below by a couple of the ship's company. What happened to him I do not know; but I learned that he was suspected of being a crook who crossed and re-crossed the Atlantic rooking all who were foolish enough to play cards with him.

This expedition was a mistake and a failure. It may have been due to the lack of persuasiveness on our part; but I doubt if anyone could have done much better. America was dead sick of subscribing



to Irish causes. The bulk of the Irish-American population might still be induced to subscribe to a political fund, but those to whom our humdrum policy would appeal were very few. I could not help feeling depressed and humiliated, for I had fancied that everybody who had the objects of our movement fully explained to him would be as enthusiastic about it as I was myself. I almost began to doubt whether it was in reality all my fancy had painted it.

So it was a relief and pleasure to get back to my office and my hard work. There I found the faithful Ikerrin keeping watch and ward, and to learn from him that, in my absence, peace had reigned supreme. No better fellow ever lived than he.

## CHAPTER XII

*Ireland in the New Century*—Controversy over the  
Book—*Noblesse oblige*—The R.D.S. and the I.A.O.S.  
—Literary Censorship

EARLY in the present century, Plunkett felt the urge to write a book entitled *Ireland in the New Century*. While he wrote well, and his English was perfect, writing did not seem to come to him easily. I invariably thought his first draft was far better than the ultimate, sand-papered and finely polished result. He consulted far too many people, whose opinions he valued for their literary ability. Possibly they helped him to turn his phrases more elegantly, but it always seemed to me that, as these men did not see with Plunkett's eyes, or think with his brain, their emendations and additions merely robbed his writings of his real personality. It was ever the same with his speeches. Possibly the best he ever delivered, and it was very short, was at the banquet given by the Labour Government at the close of the Wembley Conference. At this function, lacking nothing of the dignity and lavishness of similar entertainments by previous administrations, Noel Buxton, then Minister for Agriculture, presided. Plunkett was called upon to speak. Up rose the frail little man, decorated with his Order of Knighthood, without preparation of any kind,

and electrified the audience with his sincerity, fluency and eloquence. Never for a moment did he halt for a word. Never before, except when making an impromptu after-dinner speech at Sir James Musgrave's, did I hear him at his very best. He was cheered to the echo. The true Horace Plunkett had revealed to us the wonderful inspiration that sustained him through all his severe illnesses, his bitter disappointments. I know I felt as if I had listened to a voice from the other world, and I think that many others felt as I did. Once, after making a good but rather haltingly delivered speech in Limerick, Dr. O'Dwyer, the Catholic Bishop—remarkable for his outspokenness—observed, "You are not a good speaker, Sir Horace". Plunkett sadly acquiesced. "Now, don't misunderstand me", went on the Bishop. "What you say is always admirable. The only trouble with you is that you won't use the wrong word when you can't remember the right one."

But to return to his book. In due time it appeared and had a wide circulation. In it he mercilessly criticised the Irish people for their lack of moral courage—a criticism, alas, as true to-day as it was then. The book contained a chapter in which the author attacked what he regarded as excessive zeal for church-building by the Roman Catholic Church. He contrasted the stately and expensive churches with the squalor that often surrounded them. He had given me this chapter to read. I disliked it and told him so quite frankly, and I said that if such a chapter had to be written,

its author should have been a Catholic and not a Protestant. I pointed out to him that the Protestants held possession of the two great cathedrals in Dublin, both of which had been churches of the ancient Faith, and that, only on rare occasions, were we able to fill one of them with a congregation. I was amazed to learn that his chief adviser in writing this chapter had been a prominent official in his Department and a most devout Catholic. However this may be, the publication of the book aroused a fierce and sometimes ill-informed controversy. Even dignatories of the assailed Church had denounced the book (which some confessed they had not read) and its author. It cannot be said that the book made the task for us organisers any easier, and it speaks volumes for the tolerance and the co-operative spirit of many Catholic priests, who had taken a prominent part in promoting the movement, that it alienated none of them. Ultimately the storm which the book had aroused died away.

Possibly the best pamphlet Plunkett ever wrote was addressed to men of his own class. It was entitled *Noblesse oblige*, a flattering title and one which it might have been hoped would have evoked a response in kind. But Plunkett had become suspect to the ultra-Tories. He had been defeated in his election for South County Dublin by the intrusion of an obscure candidate whose chief credentials were that he was a Tory of the "diehard" order. The Unionist vote was split and the seat captured by the Nationalist Party.

Very few of his class understood his aims, still fewer shared them. But for the fact that Christopher La Touche, a great power in that stronghold of Toryism, the Kildare Street Club, remained openly his friend, I can almost believe that he would have shared Edward Martyn's ostracism. I have mentioned the expressed opinions of the old gentlemen in the County Clare Club as to Oxford University and its products. Somewhat similar opinions were prevalent in Kildare Street. When his pamphlet *Noblesse oblige* came out, it aroused no spark of nobility in these men. I was told that one afternoon some of them were discussing Plunkett and his pamphlet, which, if it had not moved them, must have stirred their consciences. John Atkinson sat languidly among them. Said one member, "What is Horace Plunkett driving at? What is this I.A.O.S. of his? Haven't we got the Royal Dublin Society, a really democratic institution? Can't it do all Plunkett wants?" (Shortly before this the Royal Dublin Society had black-balled one of the best farmers in County Dublin, who sought admission, because he was a Home Ruler!) Then quoth the Attorney-General, "Democratic be damned! Isn't the Royal Dublin Society only the Kildare Street Club daubed with cow dung?" Once at a meeting in Belfast, at which Plunkett and I attended, I met Sir George Wolff, of the great firm of Harland and Wolff. He said to me in his guttural voice, "I have never been able to understand Horace Plunkett, but I mean to go on subscribing to his Society".

He was never properly understood by his class, except for a notable few. The only people who came nearest to an understanding of him were those who worked with and under him. Even they, at times, were puzzled. He had never taken any active part in the Royal Dublin Society, which, I felt, was a mistake. Even then it was doing good work, while its shows had come to be regarded as among the principal features in agricultural advancement as well as great social gatherings. On its Council there were a great many prominent Irishmen of culture and great influence. While Plunkett did not and, indeed, could not sneer at the achievements of the R.D.S., I always thought him indifferent about it. Our organisation was only in its early days, and it is easy to see now that the R.D.S. and its influential Council might have befriended us in many ways if we had approached them. I am almost certain that there must have been some "regrettable incident" during the beginning of the I.A.O.S. which kept it aloof from the older body.

Plunkett fell foul of quite a number of people without any conscious thought or act of his. At times he was very absent-minded, at all times he was near-sighted. I believe his inability to recognise faces was inherited from both his parents, and when he realised that such an incident had occurred he was more grieved and upset by it than the acquaintance he had unwittingly offended. He could not recognise a person across a narrow street and was eternally offending people who did

not know of this defect by, apparently, cutting them. When I was with him he always asked me to identify the approaching person. At our general meetings it was part of my duty to shout "Name and Society, please" when any delegate rose to speak, even when the person was known to me. His *entourage* had always to be on the *qui vive* when he was moving about through any considerable number of people. We were crossing to England one morning and another member of the Kildare Street Club was talking to me. Plunkett came up and ignored his club-mate. "Is it possible", I said, "that you don't know Horace Plunkett?" "I ought to", he replied dryly; "I think I have been introduced to him at least eleven times."

This failing, and a strong dislike, for anything approaching vulgarity—or, indeed, for any peculiarity which grated on him—earned for him the unmerited reputation of being snobbish and stuck-up. His nature was really simple, as were his tastes and his pleasures. That he could be coldly haughty at rare times, most of us knew. But the occasions were very rare and the provocation, usually, very great. Not that he could not develop a really fine, wholesome rage, but never without sufficient reason. A really great, generous heart was concealed behind his apparently cold and seldom demonstrative manner. Some people imagined that, because they and he addressed each other by their Christian names, they knew him well. They never knew the real Horace Plunkett as only a

few of us were privileged to know him, but without these artificialities of intercourse.

No stickler for "form for form's sake", he could be meticulous about comparatively small matters.

After one memorable experience, I never let him see the drafts of circulars relating to routine subjects which had to be issued, over my name, from the I.A.O.S. Unfortunately the draft of such a circular, to be finally revised by me before issue, fell into his hands. It had been laboriously compiled by a comparatively new hand, who prided himself on his literary ability. The President brought it to me, "amended" from A to Z. Scarcely a word of the original remained. "Did you draft this thing?" he said disgustedly. "There are two split infinitives in it, and, even amended as I have tried to amend it, it won't do." I murmured, apologetically, that the great Arthur Balfour had been guilty of the use of the split infinitive in his *Defence of Philosophic Doubt*. I then put the "revised version" before its hapless author, who sighed deeply and said "Lord! that man would amend the Lord's Prayer!" I called to mind an admonition by his old ranching partner, Alexis Roche: "D-d-don't let H-Horace near anything you have written. He'd amend an order for a bag of coal." Henceforth I did any necessary revision myself, contenting myself with punctuation, dotting *i*'s and crossing *t*'s. And it worked all right. Later on, by careful study of the beautiful phraseology of the Treasury letter-writers, I learned to imitate their style so closely (never for-



getting the respectful reference to "Their Lordships") that the important letters I had to address to that department on the subject of our grant from the Development Commissioners underwent but little pruning at the hands of our President.

## CHAPTER XIII

Bank Overdrafts—Their Evil Effects—The Policy of the Irish Banks—Debentures as Security for Loan Capital—The “Binding Rule”—Overlapping

FROM the very beginning of the Co-operative Movement down to the present day, the societies, and especially the creameries, have been handicapped by lack of share capital. In no case has the amount paid up on the shares sufficed to erect and equip the necessary premises, still less to provide any working capital. In the earliest days the farmers were not only short of money but, even where they possessed it, they were reluctant to part with it, although the soundness of the investment offered by the co-operative creameries had been amply demonstrated to them. The rule had been laid down, and was generally observed, that milk-supplying members should take shares in proportion to the number of their cows. But the instances were rare where any farmer took shares in excess of the number of his dairy cows. Even before the more costly machines and equipment, now insisted upon, were installed, when the plant was, comparatively, primitive and, relatively, cheap, it was never possible to erect and equip a creamery on a capital represented by £1 per cow. Moreover the shares were never fully paid at the outset, but

were usually paid up by instalments of 5s. per share, sometimes spread over several years. As a matter of fact a great many societies still show considerable amounts of uncalled share capital in their balance-sheets after the lapse of nearly forty years. Recourse, therefore, had to be made to the Joint Stock Banks for the necessary additional capital. These institutions were ready enough to lend, for they obtained money cheaply by accepting deposits on which the rate of interest varied from 1 to (rarely)  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, according to the prevailing bank rate. Moreover the number of their customers was often thereby augmented because the members of a society usually placed their banking accounts with their society's bank. A joint and several personal guarantee was invariably insisted upon, and it was by no means the easiest part of the organiser's work to prevail upon a relatively small section of the members, of whose solvency the bank had to be satisfied, to make themselves liable for a large sum of money. Only in comparatively rare instances could a man, substantially wealthier than his neighbours, be induced to join in such a guarantee, for he realised that, in the event of the bank calling in the advance, he might, and probably would, be singled out as being the best mark. Even from the banks' point of view this form of security could not have been other than unsatisfactory. As time went on and the number of societies increased, the banks were approached with a view to securing a modification of the old form of guarantee. It was suggested that, in order

to make every member of the Society liable for an equitable and definitely limited amount, totalling in the aggregate to a sum exceeding the amount of the loan required by 25 to 30 per cent, each individual should make himself responsible for a definite amount in proportion to his means. This margin was rendered necessary in order to insure the bank against any weakening of the security through death or failure of any of the signatories.

As far as I can remember, this plan was only accepted by the banks in two instances, and they were neither important nor large societies. The banks frankly disapproved of the alternative because it would throw upon them the onus, in case of having to call in the loan, of having to proceed against a large number of guarantors, some quite small men, instead of being able to look to one, or a few who were really good marks. Had this plan found favour with the banks, I am convinced it would have been far better for them in the long-run, and it would have enabled us who were organising the farmers into societies to form them on a proper co-operative basis akin to that of the Danish societies. As it is, banks have in many instances lent large sums of money to societies, even larger than was prudent, because they felt they could rely on the personal guarantees they held. To-day, owing to the conditions which have arisen, the value of a good many of these guarantees has become seriously impaired. As a rule the guarantors are among the best customers the bank has in the area covered by the Society, and to be

obliged to seek to recover the amount of the guarantee from their own clients is a step which no bank cares to take. In the case of the alternative, the collective and limited guarantee which was proposed to the banks, there was also included an undertaking that loans thus guaranteed would be paid off by instalments covering a definite period of ten years. Each year a deduction was to be made from the milk payments to each signatory equivalent to one-tenth of his guarantee, in return for which the guarantors would be allotted shares in the Society equal to the amount so deducted from his milk payments. Thus at the end of ten years the Society would be out of debt, the guarantee would have been discharged and the amount of the guaranteed loan capital would have been converted into share capital for the benefit of the guarantors *pro rata* to the amount of their guarantees. Even where a bank advanced money on the security of a joint and several guarantee it is rather surprising that its repayment within a reasonable time was not stipulated for; it would have been far better for both borrower and lender.

I remember bringing this scheme to the late Christopher La Touche — probably the best financial authority in Ireland of his day — and he was greatly pleased with it. There was nothing new in it for I had merely tried to adapt the Danish plan to our Irish conditions. The bankers, in their wisdom, turned it down; but I shall be greatly surprised if they do not have to revert to it, doubtless with some amplifications and modifications, in

order to escape from the objections and drawbacks to the present method. Quite apart from the unfairness of requiring a small group of members to shoulder a huge burden for the benefit of the community, without even a shadow of advantage to themselves, it was utterly subversive of the co-operative idea. In order to induce men to become guarantors, it was necessary to safeguard their position as far as possible. Accordingly, if they were willing to serve, they were invariably elected on the committee, even though they might have no special qualification for the position, and they could not be removed from the committee while they remained guarantors unless others, acceptable to the bank, could be found who were willing to take their place on the guarantee. Very often the entire committee was composed of guarantors who virtually held office in perpetuity; for the guarantees were but rarely discharged, at all events in full, and until the entire debt had been repaid the guarantee remained operative.

Now, one of the most important, if not the most important, functions of a society's general meeting is, or should be, the election of the committee. In a society whose committeemen were guarantors to the bank, and therefore fixtures, during the term of their liability, there could be no election and, consequently, little interest in the proceedings for the ordinary member. As a result, the attendances at these gatherings dwindled until it often became almost impossible to secure a quorum to transact the necessary routine business. This, in its turn,

led to general apathy on the part of the members who left the conduct of the society's affairs entirely in the hands of the guarantor-committeemen. Nothing could have been worse for the co-operative character of the undertaking and nothing could have been more calculated to destroy even its vitality as a trading concern. In standing out for the original joint and several form of guarantee on the grounds that the guarantors might be trusted in their own interest to look after the business, the banks had unintentionally dealt a deadly blow to all that differentiates a co-operative society from a joint-stock company. Co-operators do not need to be told that the extraordinary vitality and strength of a properly constituted co-operative society depends almost altogether upon the degree in which its members believe in and give practical demonstration of the co-operative spirit. Irish bankers, however, seem to have completely overlooked this essential fact. Again and again have they pointed out to me what are, in truth, grave defects in the societies. But the gravest of all these defects is due to the insistence of the banks on a form of security which should never have been allowed to obtain an abiding place in our movement. In justification of the rigidly conservative policy of the banks in this connection, it is only fair to say that co-operation was little understood, for it was quite new to Irish bankers. Elsewhere, the co-operative societies, favoured by more suitable legislation, and formed under a constitution more appropriate than that permitted by our laws, had established

themselves firmly and had earned a high reputation for stability and credit-worthiness. In Ireland the bankers regarded co-operation as an experiment, the success of which had yet to be proved.

To illustrate what I have been endeavouring to explain, I may mention that there is quite a considerable number of societies which from first to last have kept the co-operative ideal alive and have steadfastly acted in accordance with it. Like the other societies, these found it necessary to supplement their insufficient share capital by obtaining secured bank overdrafts. But they wisely decided on paying off these loans, either out of their profits or by deductions from the payments to their members, or by both. To-day these societies owe their bankers nothing, while many of them have substantial sums to their credit as well as considerable reserves. What these truly co-operative societies have done, all could have done, provided that the co-operative spirit had been kept alive—that spirit which induces communities of comparatively poor men to make temporary sacrifices for the ultimate attainment of their object, in freeing themselves and their undertaking from debt in order to be able to pass it on as an unencumbered inheritance to their children. Unhappily it is otherwise with the great majority of societies. Their bank overdrafts, instead of diminishing, have in many cases increased, often to an extent which must be almost a nightmare to the guarantors and an ever-present anxiety to the creditor bank. This absolutely



unsound financial condition must be either ended or mended. That it can be, to some extent, mended I propose to show.

As the law now stands, any Limited Company can offer as security for loan capital a debenture covering all its assets, including its uncalled share capital. As the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts of 1893 and 1913 are framed, no society can issue debentures unless they are registered as bills of sale. In the Irish Free State the registration of a bill of sale involves an instant estoppel of credit. A society adopting such a procedure would be inevitably doomed and would very swiftly be obliged to go into liquidation. The framers of these Acts, in their feverish devotion to the co-operative ideal and their fervent desire to protect the societies from any form of exploitation, decided, in their wisdom, to deny them the power to issue debentures except under an obligation to declare themselves, to all intents and purposes, bankrupt. If co-operative credit is ever to be put on a communal rather than a personal basis (when it must cease to be in any sense co-operative), the law ought to be immediately amended. As between the credit-worthiness of a joint-stock company and a co-operative society, viewed purely as business concerns, there is absolutely nothing to choose. One is as good, or as bad, as the other. But the company can issue debentures without damaging its credit while the co-operative society is debarred therefrom. In the vast majority of cases where societies are now indebted to banks, a debenture

covering the entire assets of the society and, in addition, its uncalled capital, would provide a far superior and, I think, a more acceptable form of security than the joint and several letter of guarantee. Its substitution would release hundreds of harried, anxious farmers whose public spirit has impelled them to shoulder an obligation to their fellows which they should never have been asked to assume. It would shift the responsibility for repayment of the loan to the whole corporation, every member of which would have to bear his just share in the event of an enforced liquidation. Probably it would, at worst, result in the loss of his shares and nothing more.

I cannot but believe that Irish bankers would welcome such an amendment of the existing law as would enable any society requiring additional capital to offer as security a debenture such as I have outlined as an alternative to the joint and several guarantee. And, as it is to be hoped that the co-operative societies now established, and such others as may be formed, are to remain as permanent institutions in this country, Irish bankers would do well to study this credit problem, not only from the narrow point of view—not always favourable, as presented by co-operative societies in Ireland, and mainly unfavourable owing to the conditions imposed by the bankers themselves—but also from the experience of foreign countries whose financiers are no less astute, where it has been found that the security offered collectively by the members of a properly constituted co-

operative society provides a perfectly sound investment for capital.

Since this chapter was written the Government of the Irish Free State have passed an Act empowering agricultural co-operative societies, approved by the Minister for Agriculture, to give debentures as security for loans from approved bodies or persons without the former disability. It remains to be seen whether the banks will accept security in this form or adhere to the joint and several guarantee.

Ireland, in common with every other agricultural country, suffers from lack of capital to develop its main industry. When all is said and done—when all has been argued about “big business”, the bald fact remains that we in Ireland are absolutely and entirely dependent on our agriculture. As a business it is carried on in a very slipshod manner because it remains, taking it all round, individualistic. We hear frantic appeals frequently for combination among farmers. But they still hold aloof from one another. They are apparently as distrustful of each other as they were forty years ago. It seems to me that the Irish banks, which must stand to lose if agriculture goes down and have everything to gain if it succeeds, have it in their hands to give the Co-operative Movement an assurance that they will agree to finance, on corporate conditions, any approved society for the development of the country’s chief industry. In the interests of the societies it would be well that the terms offered by the bank were sufficiently

onerous to deter the society from any risky adventure but, at the same time, liberal enough to encourage legitimate development and enterprise. In almost every other country where agricultural co-operation has become a recognised institution, the societies are federated with a Central Co-operative Bank. The need for such a bank in Ireland, where no less than nine banking corporations ranking as the most successful and stable institutions are competing with each other for such business as there is, does not appear at first sight to be great or urgent. In addition to the nine banking companies, there is the Agricultural Credit Corporation, which is prepared to make loans on approved security, but at higher rates of interest than are charged by the banks. This higher rate is necessitated because a large proportion of the capital of the Corporation has been provided by the Irish banks, which are also strongly represented by directors and ex-officials on its board.

The Irish banks are as well managed as any banks in the world and are perfectly satisfactory as ordinary business concerns. They do not, however, cater satisfactorily for co-operative societies in the matter of credit, as I have shown. What every Co-operative Movement needs is a central bank of its own, whose directors would be thoroughly conversant with the needs of the federated societies and whose sole aim and object would be to supply those needs. Such a bank would keep the entire funds of the movement in active circulation in the movement itself, where they might fructify. As

matters stand, it would be quite impossible to obtain the necessary capital to establish a Central Co-operative Bank.

There is another, but not so serious, defect in the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1893, and the Amending Act of 1913. No person may hold more than £200 worth of shares in a society. Seeing that "one man one vote" is the invariable rule in co-operative societies, this limitation would appear to be not only unnecessary but also actually restricted, for in cases where a comparatively rich man might be ready and anxious to invest more than £200 in shares, he is debarred from doing so. This disability has, without doubt, tended to render the necessity for augmenting the share capital by borrowing greater than it need have been. Whereas interest on shares is almost universally limited to 5 per cent, and may be fixed at a lower rate by the general meetings, the bank rate fluctuates in accordance with the conditions of the money market over which the co-operative societies can exercise no control, and, while it may occasionally be possible for a favourably circumstanced society to borrow at 5 per cent, the rate is usually higher. It seems clear, therefore, that it would be preferable for societies to borrow from their members by means of share capital, a portion of which might, in such cases, be withdrawable, at an agreed and fixed rate of interest and thus keep their money in circulation among themselves.

The invariable necessity for supplementing the share capital of a society by bank borrowings soon

came to be accepted as a necessary evil, while the knowledge that the supplementary capital could always be so obtained had the inevitable tendency of curtailing the amount of the investments by members. A man with twenty cows would take twenty £1 shares and no more. If he had been convinced that he could not have had the creamery unless he made himself responsible for £40, he would probably have agreed to do so. As things were, he paid up what was required on his shares, often only 5s. in the £, and thought little more about it. He regarded it more in the light of a subscription to a worthy object than as an investment in a business in which he was a partner. If his liability, in the event of failure, had been made greater he might, and probably would, have taken a keener interest in the undertaking. As things were, he was interested little in his trifling investment, but sometimes a good deal more in hawking his milk supply from his own creamery to some competing concern — alas, often misnamed co-operative — where he could get an extra farthing per gallon for it, for his insignificant share investment afforded no anchorage to the society he had joined. We, organisers of the new movement, were by no means oblivious of this fact; but we saw the Irish dairying industry going rapidly to the dogs, and we were forced to go in for a plan of jerry-building quite at variance with our better judgment. We had to make the entry of each dairy farmer into the organisation that was designed to save his industry as easy and attractive as was possible. And yet many

of these apparently ill-conceived ventures met with most remarkable success.

After a good deal of negotiation, we were able to obtain one important concession. The banks agreed that in cases where no "controversial" form of co-operation was carried on (*i.e.* trade in domestic requisites) they would grant the "non-controversial" societies overdrafts at a flat rate of 4 per cent. Internally we had endeavoured to safeguard the guarantors by the introduction of a rule whereby every person becoming a member should accept an additional liability in "Loan Guarantee Shares" equal in face value to that of his ordinary shares. On the "Loan Guarantee Shares", which were of nominal value of £1, one shilling only was paid up. The remaining nineteen shillings could only be called up in the event of liquidation, and then only to the extent required to meet the liabilities of the society.

Contrast these clumsy expedients with the simplicity of Continental co-operative finance, where a productive society such as a creamery or bacon factory could borrow, in its corporate capacity, all that it needed, *but* always on the strength of an inviolable contract with its members to supply all their raw material to it for a period of years sufficient to enable it to discharge its capital debt and, by a simple process of amortisation, to convert that debt into shares apportioned to each member in proportion to the value of the raw material he had supplied.

Thus were we hampered by the traditional

practice of our banks. Apparently they had not visualised a new type of borrower to which their established system in dealing with necessitous individual borrowers was quite unsuitable.

Even the most ardent co-operator does not wish to see the place of our excellent Irish banks taken by any new banking institution which would have, for its special function, the financing of the Co-operative Movement even if the establishment of such an institution were feasible. But would it be too much to suggest that the Standing Committee of the Irish banks should devote one of its sessions to the consideration of the needs of the Co-operative Movement? Surely a business which has an annual turnover of many millions sterling should be deserving of some thought. Even if no actual change in policy resulted from such consideration, it could not fail to be instructive and it might even be fruitful. Speaking for the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, of which I am now President, I can promise any such meeting of the bankers' committee plenty of evidence in regard to the necessity of reform.

Many years ago we endeavoured to introduce into the creameries what was called the "Binding Rule", designed to place them on a par with the Danish creameries and bacon factories. It imposed on farmers taking shares in creameries the obligation to supply all their milk to the creamery they joined, except what was needed for domestic purposes. It was a good and perfectly equitable rule; but the damages entailed by its breach were



impeached by a man named McEllistrim, who was sued and decreed in the County Court by the Ballymacelligott Creamery, in County Kerry. The Judge of Assize affirmed the decree of the Court below, a judgment later confirmed by the Court of Appeal. Aided by opponents of the Co-operative Movement, the appellant brought the case to the House of Lords. There, by a majority of 3 to 2, the appeal was allowed and the I.A.O.S. was cast in costs to the tune of £3000. The majority of the House of Lords held that the rule was "in restraint of trade". We thought the case was so important that we had faced the heavy cost involved, because we believed that our rule was merely a protection of the individual against himself. As the rule ran, it operated *in saecula saeculorum*, whereas if we had limited it to a definite period, I think the appeal would have been dismissed. This has now been rectified in accordance with the judgment of the House of Lords. Without some such rule there is nothing to prevent a shareholder in a society becoming a "free-lance" and hawking his milk supply about to the highest bidder. This, in its turn, leads to the practice, in a few creameries where this most unwholesome and un-co-operative method still survives, of paying for milk, not on the basis of its fat content but on the proximity or remoteness of the supplier to the creamery.

I can only conclude this chapter by urging all creameries in their own interest to agree to a voluntary delimitation of their boundaries and to

bind themselves not to take milk from any outsiders. Until this is done, the evils of overlapping, and they are many, will continue. If creamery societies will not take this step of their own accord, they may be compelled to do so in the near future. There are actually cases at present where carters, employed to bring milk to a certain creamery, deliver it to another without the consent of the suppliers!

## CHAPTER XIV

### Aid from the Development Commission

IT has been previously mentioned that a memorandum had been furnished by the Joint Board for Organisation to the Development Commission setting forth the claims of the three Agricultural Organisation Societies to grants in aid of their work under the powers conferred on the Commission to aid in developing agriculture by the organisation of co-operation. It had been laid down that such grants could only be made to voluntary organisations not trading for profit. All three Agricultural Organisation Societies fulfilled these conditions and each of the three bodies, in Ireland, England and Scotland, made independent applications for financial assistance. The Development Commissioners were much impressed by the case made in the Memorandum of the Joint Board which they described as "an able and illuminating document", and, without much delay, interim grants of £3000 and £1000 were made respectively to the A.O.S. and the S.A.O.S. In accordance with the established procedure, all such applications had to be transmitted for their observation to the particular Department of Government most closely connected with the applicant body. The

application of the I.A.O.S. was, therefore, referred to the Department of Agriculture in January 1911. Instead of dealing departmentally with the I.A.O.S. application, Mr. T. W. Russell decided to refer it to the Council of Agriculture at its meeting on the 16th November 1911, just ten months after it had been sent to the Commission. Beyond all manner of doubt, Mr. Russell's action was deliberately designed to delay, if not frustrate altogether, this attempt on the part of the I.A.O.S. to secure the financial relief to which it was at least as much entitled as were the sister organisations in England and Scotland.

Prior to this, Mr. Russell had striven by every means in his power, when the Development Bill was going through Parliament, to have eliminated from the measure the provision which enabled the Development Commissioners to provide financial assistance to such bodies as the I.A.O.S. In this, however, he had been unsuccessful and so he had to fall back upon the pliant Council of Agriculture to back him up in his opposition. That body actually agreed with Mr. Russell, and, not only that, but also endorsed his preposterous alternative that, if money were to be given at all, it should be to the Department, which would then take over the organisation of the sterilised brand of co-operation of which Mr. Russell approved. Nothing was left undone to secure an adverse vote to the I.A.O.S. in the Council. Mr. Russell took the opportunity to launch a most violent attack on the I.A.O.S., and Mr. Denis Johnston, Secretary of

the United Irish League, issued a private circular to members of the Council, charging the I.A.O.S. with political intrigue. The Council by a substantial majority endorsed the action and words of the Vice-President.

Subsequently, the Development Commissioners refused to endorse the scheme of "non-controversial co-operation" put forward by Mr. Russell and reinstated the application of the I.A.O.S., with the result that an immediate grant of £2000 was made with a further grant, not exceeding £4000 *pro rata* to the Society's independent income. Finally, in July 1913, the Treasury endorsed the action of the Development Commissioners and tardy justice was at last done to the I.A.O.S. after an interval of two years and a half, during which time it must have collapsed but for the financial support of the societies and their friends. Of course it was quite impossible that this vexatious and even malicious withholding of the Society's unquestionable rights should not have aroused great bitterness in the I.A.O.S. and intensified the unhappy antagonism between it and the Department. For some considerable time the payment of the very modest salaries of the staff had, perforce, to be withheld. The work of the Society had been planned during the long period which elapsed between the sending in of the application to the Development Commission and the actual payment of any grant. Had it not been for £1800, which Horace Plunkett provided, the work must have ceased altogether, and the unfortunate staff would have had to be disbanded.

There can be no manner of doubt that this was what the Vice-President of the Department earnestly desired. He hated the I.A.O.S. because his trader and political allies feared it. What Gill and the higher officials of the Department thought about the whole transaction was never disclosed. As Civil Servants they had to be as loyal to their new chief as they had been to his predecessor, and, moreover, the rules of the Public Service forbade their expressing any opinion other than an uneasy shrugging of the shoulders. If anything had been necessary to reconcile me to having stepped down in Gill's favour, it was this discreditable episode in which, as Secretary, I should have either had to acquiesce or else send in my papers. There need be no doubt as to which course I should have adopted.

Aided by the Development Commissioners, several of whose principal members<sup>1</sup> regularly attended our meetings, a great peace seemed to fall upon us. There was neither trouble nor friction of any kind. The work went on harmoniously, the representatives of the Commission being as keenly interested in it as we were ourselves. I think this circumstance goes far to controvert the impression that prevailed that I and my colleagues on the Society's staff were "poison-mad, pig-headed fighters". All we wanted was fair treatment, and now that we had secured it we were just as biddable as we were formerly alleged to be recalcitrant. The

<sup>1</sup> Usually the Earl of Shaftesbury, K.P., Mr. A. D. Hall (now Sir Daniel Hall, K.C.B.), the late Mr. Vaughan Nash, C.B., and Mr. Iones-Davies.

Development Commissioners had to observe the rules and customs of the Public Service just as the Department had been obliged to observe them. But there was a marked change in the manner of their observance, and none of us had ever to be called to account for any transgressions. Before long, the conditions which restricted the expenditure of the grant to societies, confining their business rigidly to agricultural business, were relaxed and the I.A.O.S. was permitted to assist and advise any society, which had as *part* of its business, trade which was purely agricultural or pertaining to agriculture. In practice it had become quite impossible to draw the line between commodities which were purely agricultural and those which were not. The restriction in question, which had at last been withdrawn, had, beyond doubt, its origin in the omission by Gill, in his report on Denmark to the Recess Committee, to make any reference to the hundreds of co-operative consumers' societies which existed in that country—side by side with the co-operative creameries, bacon factories and egg-export societies at the time of his visit. The omission had been seized on and Denmark was represented as a country where all co-operative societies were productive and none distributive. It was a lamentable and costly omission, justified only by what may be charitably considered to have been expediency—that expediency being the expediting of the passage of the Agricultural and Technical Instruction Bill and the disarming of traders' opposition to the Depart-

ment. I have tried to excuse Gill for having suppressed all reference to the consumers' societies in Denmark by endeavouring to believe that he had been unaware of their existence and had concentrated on those organisations which directly concerned the farmers' industry, but the man himself was too observant and the range of his enquiry was too wide to have allowed the existence of nearly 1000 of these bodies to escape his notice. Similarly, in his report to the Recess Committee on France, no mention is made of the many hundreds of co-operative consumers' societies which then existed and were in active co-operation.



## CHAPTER XV

### The Plunkett House—A Permanent Headquarters

THE first offices of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society were two small rooms on an upper floor at the corner of Trinity Street and College Green. These we only occupied temporarily. From thence we moved to more commodious quarters on the first floor of 2 St. Stephen's Green. Here we stayed until an epidemic of tonsillitis, traced to very ancient and very defective sewerage, drove us forth. We were then temporarily accommodated at 29 South Frederick Street, until we were able to secure premises large enough to house our growing staff and that of the *Irish Homestead*. We ultimately secured fairly good quarters at 22 Lincoln Place. They had their disadvantages, however; we were next door to the Dental Hospital, and each morning as we were settling down to our work our ears were assailed with agonised shrieks, as if emitted by lost souls. I made enquiry of my excellent dentist, who was one of the chief operators in what I had come to regard as a torture chamber, and he assured me that the groans and yells which had so harrowed our feelings were merely vocal expressions of patients who were gradually recovering conscious-

ness as the effect of the anaesthetic passed off. Their troubles were over; so why did they yell and scream? Were the pains of the previous period of benumbed agony only temporarily benumbed, and did the pain return with the return of consciousness? Behind us, and with neither screens nor blinds to hide the gruesome sights, we had the Pathological Laboratory of Trinity College, the staff of which never seemed to cease from their gory labours. Now it was a human head, now a leg or an arm, but sometimes, worst of all, a human trunk in process of evisceration. I suppose we got accustomed to these sounds and sights in time; at any rate, the movement kept on growing rapidly.

Finally, I got together a committee, unknown to Plunkett, and discussed with them the possibility of buying one of the fine old Dublin houses and then presenting it to the founder as a workshop and as a permanent headquarters for the movement. A considerable sum of money was raised and, still acting secretly, the committee purchased No. 84 Merrion Square, put it in thorough order and repair and furnished it suitably. We decided to call it "*The Plunkett House*", *not* "Plunkett House"—as some still persist in calling it. A plaque with the following inscription was placed over the fireplace in the hall:

TO

HORACE PLUNKETT

THIS HOUSE WAS PRESENTED BY HIS FRIENDS AND  
FELLOW-WORKERS IN RECOGNITION OF HIS  
EFFORTS FOR THE WELL-BEING OF HIS  
COUNTRY AND AS AN AID TO HIM  
IN THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT  
OF HIS WORK

*11th November, 1908*

When I told Plunkett of the coming presentation, he seemed anything but grateful, as I hoped he would be. He said he could do his work anywhere and that a big house like this would be merely a white elephant and a great expense to keep up. He must have seen how horribly mortified and crestfallen I was, for indeed his words had been anything but gracious, and he said it had been very good of us to have thought of such a thing, but that, while the funds of the I.A.O.S. were at such a low ebb, he could have wished that the cash for the purchase of the house had been diverted to the society. I had to explain that the money would never have been subscribed if it had not been for the object in view. Up to this I had not told him who were on the Presentation Committee, and I rather fancy he thought I alone was the originator of the idea. He had lately acquired the habit of curbing my impetuosity, and I suppose he thought that, although the house had been

bought and paid for, it might be no harm to admonish me once more. But when he saw, among many others, the names of his two most esteemed friends in Ulster, Thomas Sinclair and Thomas Andrews, figuring on the list of the Presentation Committee, his whole attitude changed. Then I took him to see the house and it became plain that he was really moved by the thought that had been displayed in providing him with a beautiful, spacious room, well, if not luxuriously, furnished, and with every convenient device ready to his hand. I forgot his first chilly reception of my announcement when I saw his very evident pleasure.

The presentation was a great affair. Thomas Andrews had insisted on our spending a considerable sum out of our fund in the purchase of a golden key enclosed in a gorgeous case. As the good man had been a very liberal subscriber to the fund, we could not say him nay. *But*, the key would not open the door!

As time passed by, Plunkett seemed to grow as much attached to his new "workshop" as he was to his hospitable home at Kilteragh. He arrived early and he stayed late, working feverishly all the time, as was his wont. I began to fear that we had made it too comfortable! And he took a delight in getting his friends to come and see him there and in showing them his present. It was no longer a "white elephant" but a highly prized possession. Plunkett never meant to be ungracious. He was greatly worried at that time over the finances of the I.A.O.S., and must have felt sore about the

treatment he had received in return for his devoted services to the Department of Agriculture. It was not to be wondered at if now and then his usually gentle temper grew somewhat short and, latterly, I fancied that I had managed to get on his nerves oftener than before. The acquisition of the Plunkett House was a very happy thought and gave all of us satisfaction and pleasure. Whatever its ultimate destination may be, it has served in its time to provide an agreeable meeting-place for several memorable gatherings and to be the source from which much valuable thought and work issued.

On the walls of the President's room hang Dermot O'Brien's portraits of the three founders, Horace Plunkett, a very fine picture and life-like portrait, Lord Monteagle, also good, and Father Finlay. My portrait, also, hangs there, painted while I was doing a "fast" of a week's duration with nothing more substantial than water, hot and cold. The meagre diet does not appear to have diminished the ruddiness of my visage, at all events in the eyes of its painter, our esteemed P.R.H.A.

In due time A.E., who then edited the *Irish Homestead*, was installed with Miss Susan Mitchell, of deathless memory, in a room over the President's. The walls of this room, which were covered with brown paper, cried out to A.E. to decorate them after his own peculiar fashion. Every square foot was embellished by his magic brush until it became a real fairyland. These frescoes are dimmed now and their glory has departed. Susan

Mitchell, gentle soul, is no longer with us, and A.E., with all his strange mixture of the practical and ideal, has left our humdrum life and work for something more congenial to him. But of all he ever wrote, I doubt if he has contributed anything more valuable, more eternally true, than his articles in the *Homestead*, written in the fairyland of his editorial sanctum in the Plunkett House.

The Co-operative Reference Library was, for several years, a very important feature of the headquarters of the movement, and was frequented by many students of co-operation from almost every part of the world who found there information which was nowhere else obtainable. We are not a studious people and are not addicted to reading. So, while Indians, Japanese, co-operators from the Dominions and foreign countries came to the Plunkett House to study in the Library, our own countrymen rarely darkened its doors. It was, therefore, little wonder that when Horace Plunkett endowed the Foundation that bears his name and has its headquarters in London, that he should have decided to transfer the Co-operative Reference Library thither. It was regrettable, but this unique source of information was not appreciated by Irish co-operators as it should have been.

## CHAPTER XVI

### The Irish Creamery Butter Control—A notable Attempt at Standardisation

EARLY in the year 1910 the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society took a very important step in the direction of levelling up the quality of the butter produced in the co-operative creameries to such a standard as would permit a brand or label, guaranteeing its quality, to be affixed to all that reached the required degree of excellence. This spontaneous effort on the part of the I.A.O.S. was not undertaken until after a very thorough investigation of the various systems in operation in Denmark, Sweden, Holland and elsewhere, in which countries national brands had been established which had come to be regarded by the trade as a reliable guarantee of quality. We copied no foreign plan slavishly; we gleaned from all of the systems ideas which seemed to us to be specially applicable to our conditions. We were fortunate enough to be able to secure the services of Professor David Houston, F.L.S., a distinguished lecturer and scientist, who had just retired from service in the Royal College of Science, but who retained all the vigour and enthusiasm of youth, blended, most happily, with a profound knowledge of his subject based on his long and unrivalled

experience in bacteriological research. Before our scheme was launched, the I.A.O.S. had tried to induce the Department of Agriculture to take it up, for it was felt that such work, as it was proposed to do, more properly belonged to the domain of the State than to a voluntary body such as the I.A.O.S. I, personally, made every effort to get the Department to father it, but I was met with all manner of objections, most of which appeared to me frivolous. I will not go so far as to say that the officials of the Department opposed it, though some of them appeared to sneer at it. The fact is that, in all the huge staff of the Department, there was not a single individual who possessed vision enough to see how vitally important and necessary was our scheme to the creameries, for I cannot recall a single instance in which any of the Department's scientific staff evinced the smallest interest in our new departure. Professor Houston's pension enabled him to accept the very modest salary we were able to offer him, but I firmly believe that, even if we could not have paid him any salary, the good man would have been ready to work as a volunteer, for nothing could exceed his enthusiasm for the project nor his devotion to the work. With the aid of some good friends we were able to provide a small, but suitably equipped, laboratory in the Plunkett House and to commence operations.

It is necessary here to quote from the text of the scheme itself its objects:

“The object of the scheme is to establish a



national brand for Irish creamery butter, of guaranteed purity and uniform excellence of quality, for the exclusive use of selected co-operative creameries, affiliated to the I.A.O.S., which are prepared to comply with the rules and conditions hereinafter set forth, which have been laid down by the creameries themselves and have been approved by the Control Committee, in order that the product of creameries participating in the Control may realise its full market value and ultimately obtain such recognition as will secure special classification in the markets of the United Kingdom.

“To attain these objects, it is proposed to admit to participation in the Control only those creameries whose standard of equipment, cleanliness and general business methods fulfil the conditions of the Control Scheme.”

The scheme went on to enumerate the services which would be rendered to participating creameries. They were the supplying of the Control labels and accessories, of pure cultures, for the preparation of “starters”, regular bacteriological examination of samples of milk, cream, water and butter, and reports thereon, inspection of creameries and instruction in the preparation of “starters”, advertisement in trade journals and information regarding buyers, and, finally, comparative statements of the results obtained by all participating creameries prepared from the periodical returns to be furnished to the Control Committee.

Then follows a definition of Control butter:

“All butter sold under the Control must

conform with this fundamental definition: 'Pure butter shall be butter manufactured in a Control Creamery, which contains no fats other than those which are derived from cows' milk, and in which the percentage of moisture does not exceed 16. It shall also bear a label with the following design:'"



The Committee of the I.A.O.S. had by that time formed several sub-committees of its own members, each having a separate and special object; the most important of these was the Creamery Sub-Committee, to which was added a representative of the Creameries from each of the four provinces. This body became the Control Committee, which had complete charge of the administration of the Control Scheme. It will thus be seen that every possible precaution had been taken to ensure that the discipline necessary for the success of the scheme should be enforced democratically, by the *participating creameries themselves*, thus differentiating it in a truly remarkable way from the various departmental schemes which had behind them the authority of the State. The creameries which joined the Control, and nearly all the best of them did, did not betray the con-

fidence which had been reposed in them. It was left to the honour of their managers not to affix the Control brand to any butter which failed to reach the required high standard of quality. In no single instance was this honourable behaviour departed from. Professor Houston was invariably advised by telegram that the use of the brand had been discontinued until he was able to detect and lay by the heels the offending microbe. It should be borne in mind that, unlike the Department (which in such cases as this might have been reasonably expected to co-operate), the I.A.O.S. had no staff of inspectors or experts at its command, one of whom could be despatched instantly to the creamery in trouble. We had to rely on the honour of the managers, and they did not let us down.

It is unnecessary to give here the conditions under which a creamery was permitted to use the brand; it will suffice to say that they covered every possible contingency and filled no less than eight octavo pages of close print.

The scheme continued long enough in operation to demonstrate its great value to the creameries. It had been hoped to have made it self-supporting, but this hope was not realised, and eventually, and most reluctantly, it was discontinued. It should never have been allowed to lapse, the Department could have stepped in, when the I.A.O.S. no longer found itself able to carry on the work, and have taken it over, lock, stock and barrel, and, with its practically unlimited resources, extended and im-

proved the original idea. The little laboratory in the Plunkett House lies derelict to-day; nothing in a similar direction, apart from the Surprise Butter Competitions, is being done by the State. Can nothing be done, will nothing be done, to revive and carry out the best scheme that was ever devised for the Irish co-operative creameries?

## CHAPTER XVII

### The Great War and After

LATE in the summer of 1914 the whole world was stunned by the declaration of war—a war which has completely changed the face of our poor earth and has swept away for ever most of those things which we prized most highly. Just at first almost everybody thought it could only last a short time, but, as weeks, months and years passed by, the horror of its vast shambles continued unabated and even became intensified. Its terrible cloud enveloped everybody and everything. Here in Ireland, we were happily spared the cruel air-raids that became common in England. We lived in comparative quiet. Prices of everything bounded sky-high and the pockets of the farmers bulged with money. Luxuries, hitherto undreamed of, were bought; money was spent like water and too often wasted. It was said, “We shall never see the poor day”. If the cost of necessities of life and of luxuries had soared, what did it matter? Were there not “tons of money” coming in?

My third son, Alan, had just come down from Oxford, a boy of fine promise, full of love of his country and of enthusiasm for co-operation which was for him almost a religion. He had been

appointed by the I.A.O.S. Committee to assist me in my work and it was to him that I looked, with confidence, to do those things I had left undone and to build up the movement on the foundations which my fellow-workers and I had so laboriously laid. He had won the heart and the confidence of Horace Plunkett in a way which I had utterly failed to do. Time and again our leader used to appeal to him: "What do *you* say, Alan?" I felt no sort of envy but rather pride. Yet it was almost pathetic to see the grey-headed founder of the movement waiting for the gravely considered opinion of a mere boy. Alan had come with me to some of the societies during his vacation and had endeared himself to all he met by his simple, unaffected manner and his keenness on co-operation. (He had been, among other things, President of the Oxford University Co-operative Society.) His quiet enthusiasm left no room for other conversation than "shop" at the end of those strenuous days. I was just as sure as Kipling's Llama that I had found my "chela", my disciple, and that he would find the magic river that would put everything straight. So I thanked God for having given me such a son. My experience is only that of many thousands of fathers. My only justification for recounting it must be that as Alan was actually on the staff of the I.A.O.S. when war broke out, it is an essential part of my story. He had been in the O.T.C. at Oxford and had learned the new "double company" drill and much other military lore that was unknown by the majority of young soldiers.

He was offered a Commission in the Royal Irish Regiment. He asked me if he might have forty-eight hours to consider. At the end of twenty-four hours he came to me and said, simply, "I have decided to go. It is my duty." I saw him off, in charge of a draft of 170 reservists, their destination St. Nazaire. On the transport was an equally large and rather turbulent draft of the Royal Irish Rifles and the last I saw of Alan was a glimpse of him standing watchfully, amidships, to prevent any collision between North and South. And so he passed for ever out of my life, out of the fine future which I fondly hoped lay ahead of him. He reached the fighting-line at Le Pilly, near Lisle, on the 19th October 1914, and joined his battalion there entrenched. The Germans had surrounded them in overwhelming numbers, but the gallant Royal Irish held out until their ammunition became exhausted. Only 18 men escaped unscathed after fighting their way back desperately with nothing but their bayonets. The battalion went into action over 700 strong. 180 prisoners, all wounded, were taken, not a round of ammunition left. All the rest were killed. Alan fell, mercifully, with a bullet through his brain and lies in an unknown grave, somewhere near where Le Pilly was. I did not hear of his death till 11th December 1914. His letters ceased, but I hoped he had been taken prisoner and I kept on writing. When my letters were returned and he was reported missing, I began to fear. And so, at last, the news came from a brother-officer, a prisoner in Germany. He had seen him killed.

That was the end of a great dream, the shattering of my highest hopes.

Naturally the exigencies of the War imposed fresh activities on the I.A.O.S. and its staff. Compulsory tillage had become the order of the day, and virgin soil, unviolated for centuries, was broken up by men who knew not how to till. Co-operation was called on to put forth efforts in directions as novel to its staff as they were to the reluctant farmers to whom they had to make appeal. While death and destruction overwhelmed France and Belgium, while the German submarines sank our ships and their aircraft bombed London and the east coast, our withers were unwrung. But there was the incessant urge on us to produce more food and to conserve our supplies—to ration them, even. And so I was translated to the Irish section of the Food Control Committee, under the Presidency of the late Lord Rhondda. Much of my time was spent in more or less fruitless ferryings over the Irish Sea to attend meetings in London. Three times during the week after the *Leinster* was torpedoed and sunk did I cross and recross the Channel, always preceded by a destroyer. Once the weather was so bad that all that could be seen of our escort was, as Kipling puts it, “just a funnel and a mast, lurching through the spray”, as she zig-zagged before us. We always met at Grosvenor House. One morning, going there, I was surprised to find the streets empty. I had heard nothing. A policeman advised me to “take cover”, that there was a raid on. As the brave man took no cover him-



self, I, though full of funk, thought it incumbent on me to carry on. At Grosvenor House, the custodian told me that they had just got the signal "All clear". That day, I remember, three other Cork men and I, of widely divergent views on almost everything, spent hours trying to obtain "justice for Ireland", but in vain. We came away from Grosvenor House at 3 o'clock, disappointed, hungry, in anything but a kindly mood. I said to them, "Where are you chaps having lunch?" They mentioned some rather remote hotel. I suggested that they might do worse than seek a meal at Brown's, where I was staying. It was close by and they hungrily assented. Arrived there, I asked Holmes, the head-waiter, what we could have. "The hot dishes are, of course, off, sir," he said, "but your friends and you can have quite a nice cold lunch if you will leave the matter in my hands." I said, "Carry on". And Holmes gave us a very good lunch. Then he sidled up to me and said softly, "You know all about DORA, sir. Of course exciseable drinks cannot now be served in the ordinary way. But if you and the other gentlemen would like a whiskey-and-soda, I can manage to *lend* you four!" Of course I "borrowed" the four and blessed the kindly Holmes. The last time I was at Brown's I was told he was seriously ill. I hope most sincerely that he has recovered and will do many such good deeds as he did that day.

It is superfluous to say that the War completely upset our ordinary routine of work and also compelled us to do things which we would not other-

wise have dreamed of doing. Societies for this, that and the other purposes were started, often on quite unsound lines. The movement appeared, on paper, to be growing at an amazing rate. We had begun to "dot the map" at a speed never before reached. But it was easy to see, even then, that much of this mushroom growth would, in its nature, be ephemeral.

My work on the Food Control Committee took up a great deal of my time and I often doubt that I performed any useful function on it. I had been roped into it, and I found its work dull and uninteresting. The issue of the Great War was still in doubt, even in grave doubt, and every man had to give such service as he could. So I divided my time between Food Control and co-operation as best I could and I found my days pretty full.

In the very middle of the War we had our own particular *bouleversement*—the rebellion of Easter Monday, 1916, one of the most tragic and yet epoch-making of events in the history of this country. I had taken a prominent part in organising a body of volunteers, composed of men of extra-military age, and the strength of this force had reached about 2000. Very reluctantly, the War Office had granted us the right to wear a uniform, adorned with a scarlet *brassard* on which the initials G.R. were displayed in black. So, almost at once we were dubbed "the gorgeous wrecks" and, in Cork, where there was quite a strong battalion, "Cork's last hope". Elsewhere, owing to our age, we were called "The Methu-

seliers". But, when the time came, the "Methuseliens" proved themselves to be men. They were the only unit which came under fire in the insurrection or during the Great War, and suffered many casualties by death and wounding.

This is only mentioned to emphasise the difficulties of the I.A.O.S. in this time of unrest. I had obtained the specific assent of my Committee before I took any part in the Volunteer Movement, and I paid for it by being wounded in the attack on Beggar's Bush Barracks on the Wednesday following the Easter Monday rising.

The I.A.O.S. was called on to organise societies for milling, for curing bacon, for owning expensive machinery in common, to be lent out to members. In the Northern Province the flax-growing industry boomed, because of the demand for aeroplane linen, while the hammers of the riveters in the shipyards spoke as if they were an immense park of machine-guns. Almost as fast as, sometimes faster than, the new ships were launched, the German U-boats sent others, with their crews, cargoes of food and war munitions, to the bottom of the sea. The crowning disaster came with the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the pride of the great Cunard Line, off the coast of County Cork.

In 1917, following a bad attack of influenza, I was stricken with angina pectoris. The pain was horrible and almost unceasing. I asked my excellent doctor one day what my chances were and begged him to tell me the truth. I was so worn out with suffering that I felt almost indifferent.

He replied, "A poor sort of dog's chance, R. A." My good nurse was not so pessimistic. "Don't believe him", she said, "*I'll* pull you through." And she did. After thirteen weeks I left my bed, a creature of skin and bone, but likely to live and recover. My life as an organiser had made me tough.

Utterly demoralised by the huge profits of War years, by hitherto unknown extravagance, which had become a habit of life long after the War profits ceased, we were quite unprepared for the post-War slump which, in 1921, had reached an acute stage. Its effect on many of the societies, especially those formed during the War, was disastrous. Those that had carried considerable stocks saw their value shrink to one-third of what they had cost. Those that had given extended credit could not recover from the debtors.

The business for which milling and implement societies were formed was no longer necessary. The whole country was strewn with the wrecks of hastily formed War-time societies. The most numerous fatalities were to be found in the General Purposes or Consumers' societies. Out of about 400 of these, less than one-fourth survive to-day. Their organisation had been defective; there was little or no supervision over them and their business methods had been slipshod. The blow fell, perhaps, less heavily on the creameries, which, in all but a few instances, weathered the storm. On the Irish Agricultural Wholesale Society, the chief trade federation of the movement, its full violence

was felt. In the year 1920 this society had a trade turnover of close on one million and three-quarters sterling. It carried stocks valued at nearly £150,000, had accepted money on deposit (mainly withdrawable at call) to an even greater amount, had given credit to societies to the extent of almost a quarter of a million sterling, and owed to trade creditors and its bankers a like amount. The scared depositors withdrew their money as fast as it could be paid out, for the dangerous position of the society had become known, trade creditors pressed as they had never done before for payment and writs were "thick as leaves on Vallombrosa". The quarter of a million outstanding debts could not be collected, for, on the strength of the credit so lavishly given to the societies by the I.A.W.S., they had in their turn been encouraged to give undue credit to their members who were now being hard pressed by their bankers and other creditors. The position appeared to be almost hopeless and, but for the wise forbearance and even generosity of the society's bankers and the Co-operative Wholesale Society, the I.A.W.S. must have inevitably collapsed, bringing down with it to destruction many of the indebted societies. It was easy to see that such a disaster must shake the whole Co-operative Movement, built up so arduously during thirty years, to its very foundations. No one realised this more clearly than myself. I had been interviewed by a deputation of some of the best and most trustworthy of the society's officials who put all these appalling facts plainly

before me. I saw that, unless the situation were boldly faced, the whole work to which I had given the best years of my life would be ruined. I was no longer a young man and the strain and sorrows of the later years and my long illness had begun to tell upon me, and I had hoped for a rest. But I knew I could not rest while all I valued most was crashing down on all sides. With many misgivings I agreed to join the board of directors, misgivings as to my own ability and my lack of business experience, and fears that it was too late to save the society. I could only comfort myself and nerve myself for the task with the reflection that it were better to go down fighting, if need be, than to watch, idly, for the end to come.

Before long, I realised that the management of the society was inefficient and that, unless drastic reforms were at once introduced, the I.A.W.S. would bleed to death. I therefore stipulated that I should be appointed Managing Director and given unlimited powers. This was agreed to. It was not a pleasant experience, nor one that I shall easily forget, for I had to be perfectly ruthless and relentless.

Fortunately, there were two excellent men, who had hitherto held only subordinate positions on the society's staff. These were promoted to the posts of Secretary and Assistant Secretary. Unhappily, the former, never a strong man and whose health had been undermined by the anxieties of his work, contracted a fatal illness and died. The latter, however, fortunately survived and is now

General Manager of the Society. In him we found what is so very rare, a combination of great business ability, integrity, courage, loyalty and amazing energy. It is mainly due to his untiring work that the society is alive to-day and is, moreover, likely to live. My services to the I.A.W.S., such as they were, were "lent" by the I.A.O.S. Committee, but for several years longer I held the titular position of Secretary to the parent body. With the sweeping out of the I.A.W.S. Augean stable, my main work had been accomplished, and, though I attend every day at the society's offices, I do not ever interfere in the management, which I am content to leave in the capable hands of Mr. John Cassidy.

After the ending of the Great War, a terrible guerilla warfare broke out in the country between the irregular Republican forces and a new force of British soldiers, mainly selected for their daredevil courage and ruthlessness. They were nicknamed the "Black and Tans" because their khaki uniform was surmounted with a black sort of Kilmarnock bonnet. If we had been spared the devastation which was suffered by Belgium and Northern France, we were to taste many of the horrors of war. Parties of Black and Tans were ambushed and each was followed by ghastly reprisals in which many who were perfectly innocent lost their lives. Houses were burnt, bridges blown up, roads blocked and destroyed, railways were torn up, signal cabins set on fire and, finally, the beautiful Ten Arch Viaduct at Mallow, which crosses the Blackwater, was utterly destroyed. The creameries

did not escape. As they were the daily rendezvous of the surrounding farmers, they became suspect in the eyes of the Black and Tans, so many of them went up in smoke or were, with their equipment, blown to atoms with high-explosives. Our organisers went about their daily work in constant peril of their lives. Many had terrifying adventures, but none suffered actual bodily harm. Open guerilla warfare developed into murderous raids by both sides. All night long in Dublin the crack of rifle and revolver and sometimes the rattle of machine-gun fire broke one's sleep. Snipers swarmed on the roofs or lurked in shelters from which they fired on anyone or anything that aroused their suspicion. But what stirred the righteous indignation of all decent people, even those who had nothing but bitter condemnation for the rising of 1916 and its after-effects, was the constant raiding of peaceful homes and the cold-blooded shooting of innocent people. Others, better qualified than I am, have related the story of those evil days during which the name of the British Government came to be execrated even by the staunchest of its former supporters. True, there was little to choose between the ferocity exhibited on both sides, but the ferocities of the Black and Tans were perpetrated under the authority of a Government supposed to be just and humane. I mention these terrible happenings to illustrate the difficulties which confronted our peaceful organisation during this veritable "reign of terror".

Even after the Black and Tans were withdrawn,



the Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland signed and an Irish Government set up, hostilities were continued for a long time between the Republicans and the Free State Army. These, if anything, were even more terrible than what had gone before, for now brother was set against brother, friend against friend. Hatreds, nurtured until this very day, sprang up, hatreds which it almost seems have become undying. When, at last, the Republican element had been outwardly subdued, there was no reality about the so-called peace. The guns ceased to bark, but the vanquished remained sullen and vengeful. The terrible "dragons' teeth" had been sown broadcast.

It is not fitting that anyone like myself, who has been always engaged in peaceful work, should imperil that work by expressing his opinions on the evil deeds of those years of strife. One can only hope and pray that time may yet efface all bitter memories and bring Irishmen to realise that the building up of the prosperity and peaceful happiness of their country is an immeasurably greater achievement than any which is the outcome of violence and internecine strife with its age-long sequel of hatred. Is it too much to hope that the august Head of the Church, to which the great majority of Irishmen belong, may yet bring the soothing influence of his vast authority and his known love of peace to bear upon the sorrows of this lovely, tortured land?

## CHAPTER XVIII

The Irish Co-operative Agency Society, Ltd., and  
the Irish Associated Creameries, Ltd.—Why both  
failed—Neither Standardisation nor Uniformity  
—Co-operative Marketing generally—A Future  
for Cheese

AN attempt to federate the co-operative creameries for the joint sale of their product was launched as early as 1893. The necessity for some federal system of sale had been forced on those few creameries which then were in operation because they had already begun to suffer from the internecine competition which, unhappily, exists until this day. Thirty-two creameries, full of confidence, entered into this attempt at associated sale and undertook to consign all their product to the Irish Co-operative Agency Society, whose headquarters were in Manchester. The Agency Society was, at the outset, theoretically at all events, a truly co-operative venture. Its only members were the federated creameries whose representatives elected its committee. To all outward appearance it fulfilled the essential conditions of a co-operative and democratically governed federation. All seemed well. The federated creameries poured in their produce without hesitation or stint to the Manchester market, where a salesman, of reputed ability, had

been placed in charge as Manager. But, the Manchester market was glutted with Danish and other butters. So the first returns of sales were disappointing, the next still more so, and the next disastrous. The salesman of "reputed ability" may have done his best to clear his cellars of a product which in those days had the unenviable reputation of "going off", which means deterioration in keeping qualities and, therefore, in value. And so the glut had to be "slaughtered" in order to save it from sale to the pastry-cooks.

From the outset the scheme had been ill conceived. I must accept my full share of blame for that, though I had been assured confidently by the Manchester Manager that he had a certain and good market for every box and every "kiel" consigned to him. As he had been in the trade for years, we, simpletons, thought he ought to know. Therefore we trusted him. But worse was to follow. Not only had the butter been "slaughtered" but payments were delayed unduly. Most of the thirty-two creameries revolted, though a few of them grimly determined to stick it out. The "slaughter" prices were bad enough, but when the payment of even these miserable prices was delayed, the creameries clamoured for an investigation. So, in the torrid summer of 1894, I found myself in Manchester for six dreadful weeks. It did not take me long to size up the situation. The man we had appointed was useless and quite incapable. His glowing credentials had been provided by firms who were only too anxious to be relieved from his

importunities for a job and delighted to be able to palm him off on a potentially dangerous though ill-informed competitor. His books were in a mess; he had made sales to firms from whom it was impossible to recover; he had given credit to others far beyond a prudent limit. I did the only thing that was possible in the circumstances, and I had plenary powers—I fired him. He went, protesting that he had done his best under impossible conditions. There I find myself sympathising with the man to some extent. But the *real* business man, before he took such a job on, would have pointed out the many vulnerable joints in our armour. I had a horrible time of it in Manchester for those six weeks. Over the city daily there hung a copper-coloured cloud. The heat was intense. I worked all day in our cellar in Withy Grove. Sometimes, at evening, I would take train to Liverpool to breathe fresh air and see the sun. Thirlmere reservoir had not been then constructed and the water shortage was so serious that baths were curtailed. Manchester stank, as it can stink! I had recovered my attack of typhoid but not all my former strength, and this spell shook me.

As I unravelled the tangled accounts of the dismissed Manager, I discovered, with the assistance of his chief clerk, who afterwards proved a treacherous creature, a number of transactions of most questionable character. And so, closing the premises for the time being, I returned to Ireland to report. Hot on my return came a writ for damages for wrongful dismissal at the suit of the

dismissed one. The action was tried before "Peter the Packer" and a Dublin Jury. Prior to its hearing, the chief clerk, before mentioned, had volunteered to our solicitor and myself sufficient evidence to appear to entitle us to a dismiss. The case hung on for some days. In the witness-box the clerk went back on all his asseverations and he was our principal witness. Well do I remember the "Packer's" charge to the Jury. In it he said, "Gentlemen of the Jury, the taciturn S—— (the clerk) was doubtless voluble enough when in consultation with Mr. Anderson and the solicitor for the defendants, but in the witness-box he proved to be extremely costive. The witness has been hanging about the precincts of this Court for some days. Gentlemen, the inference is obvious." The Dublin Jury cast the Agency Society in £500 damages and costs.

One would have thought that this verdict, with its attendant damages and costs, would have ended the Agency Society. But it did not, and, after many changes and vicissitudes, it managed to survive until quite recently when it was obliged to go into liquidation. Quite early in its life it was found to be quite impossible to impose the obligation on federated societies to sell all their product through it. They only consigned butter for sale when they were unable to obtain a firm price at a satisfactory figure elsewhere. So, in times of slump, the Agency Society provided a haven of refuge for societies whose managers were poor salesmen. The Agency would take their butter and sell it and earn its

commission. It had also gone into the business of providing the creameries with the ordinary requisites of their business, *e.g.* packages, salt, oil, acids, etc., and managed to work up a good trade in this line, as it could rely on the support of those creameries whose butter had been accepted for sale when no other buyers offered. But, mainly, the Agency had become little more than a moderately benevolent butter merchant. It bought as cheaply as it could and marketed to the best advantage. During these later days it had been skillfully and ably managed by its two principal officials, both products of the Co-operative Movement. But, as to the Agency Society itself, long before its liquidation, it had become, in my eyes, an excrescence on the Co-operative Movement.

How easy it is to discern the causes of failure when it has become impossible to avert it and the blow has fallen!

When the Agency Society was started in 1893 it was born before its time. We had no secured markets in England and our product, even at its best, was unreliable in quality, uncertain in delivery and absolutely without uniformity. We had not realised what we were up against—an unbroken stream of butter from Denmark, possibly not as good as our best, but always good, always uniform, always delivered as per contract. We were fighting with bows and arrows against machine-guns. We tried all manner of tricks. We packed our butter in “kiels”, 1 cwt. casks, with “locked” hoops, to imitate the popular Danish package. Now and then

our butter was undoubtedly palmed off as Danish. But the uniformity could not be maintained. There was lacking in our Irish creameries that strict standard of cleanliness and order which had won Denmark her supremacy. At its best, there was nothing to touch Irish creamery butter. But how often was it at its best? And, even at its best, it sometimes used to go stale and develop unpleasant flavours after a few days, whereas the relatively insipid Danish product remained unchanged.

It has always seemed strange to me that the lesson of the Agency Society, although it had not then actually gone into liquidation, was not taken to heart by the framers of the constitution of the Irish Associated Creameries—a body formed in 1928 and, at the outset, warmly supported by the creameries. The chief lesson which ought to have been learned by the failure of the Agency Society was that it is perfectly futile to attempt to centralise the sale of any product, so variable in quality, as butter without first standardising it and providing a machinery that will maintain that standard. I, personally, urged that view on the promoters, who agreed that standardisation, plus a Government brand or mark, which could only be used on butter of the required high quality, was eminently desirable. But, they argued, the need for centralised marketing was so very urgent and the number of creameries which could qualify to use such a brand was, relatively, so small, that unless the admittedly chaotic condition of individual marketing was to be allowed to continue, there was nothing for it but to

launch the project and admit to membership every creamery, good, bad and indifferent, that applied. I could see nothing in the Irish Associated Creameries more than a reproduction of the Agency Society, but on a larger scale, and I continued to urge that no creameries other than those which consistently gained high marks in the Surprise Butter Competitions should be admitted, or, if all creameries were to be admitted, the "gilt-edged" butter should be placed in a class by itself and be sold under a brand, indicative of its high quality, which could only be used under the most drastic conditions. I argued that, if this were done and it could be shown that butter sold under this special brand realised a definitely higher price than that obtainable for unbranded butter, all the creameries would strive hard to gain admission to the "inner circle". I am as strongly convinced to-day as I was then that I was right in this view. Unquestionably, the I.A.C. was of benefit to small, indifferently managed creameries whose managers had small experience of salesmanship and whose small output could not make any impression nor obtain any recognition in the world market. These the I.A.C. did certainly help. But complaints began to come in that the prices realised by the better managed and larger creameries were disappointing and not so good as their managers had been able to obtain before they joined the I.A.C. It speaks volumes for the loyalty of these creameries that, in spite of their complaints—often well founded—they held on to the I.A.C. until it was forced by defections and



general discontent to go into liquidation in its third year.

Seeing that I could not prevail on the promoters to adopt my views, I tried very hard to bring about an amalgamation with the Agency Society, which, although it had become an ordinary butter-merchant business, or, at best, a sort of friendly broker, was well and carefully managed by two men of great experience in the butter trade. I foresaw that as long as the Agency Society lay athwart of the path of the I.A.C., it must be a really formidable competitor. The Agency Society had numerous friends among the creameries. It had been in existence for nearly forty years and it had retained this much of its original co-operative character—its directors were appointed by its federated societies. Of recent years it had extended its large and profitable business in the supply of creamery requisites, packages, parchment, salt, oil and such like. In brisk markets it was forced to buy its supplies of butter at firm prices, just like any other butter merchant, but, when markets were dull and creameries had no demand, the Agency Society was inundated with dumped butter. Its services in selling these large consignments of butter, which the creameries themselves could not dispose of, earned for it their gratitude. In return, they bought their creamery requisites from the Agency, sometimes at higher prices than they could procure them elsewhere. I have had unmistakeable evidence of this loyalty and of the extent to which the Agency had created for itself a real goodwill, and I was more

than ever convinced that, unless it were amalgamated with the I.A.C., it would prove a thorn in the side of that body. Financially, the Agency Society was embarrassed, but not to so great an extent as to present an absolute bar to amalgamation. Its bankers, the Munster and Leinster Bank, were also the bankers of the I.A.C., and it is almost inconceivable that the bank directors would not have gone a long way to assist in bringing about the amalgamation of the two bodies. I was assured that the Agency was quite willing, but, after prolonged negotiations, the directors of the I.A.C. declined to take the step. I have always regarded this as a very great mistake on their part. If my suggestion had been carried out, a formidable competitor would have been removed, the former members of the Agency Society would have given their wholehearted support to the I.A.C., and the latter body would have secured the services of two very able and experienced business men.

Under existing conditions there does not seem to be any object in attempting to form a new marketing federation, the chief function of which would have been to operate in the British markets. Even if these markets were open to us as before, the failures of the Agency Society and the I.A.C. are still too fresh in people's memories to afford much ground for hope that any new proposals would receive greater support.

Meanwhile, it is most gratifying to note that the standard of quality of Irish creamery butter is steadily improving, as is evidenced by the very high

scoring in the Surprise Butter Competitions. The time is approaching when no butter but the very best will be saleable, except at unremunerative prices. Some of our creameries have proved their ability to produce butter of such high quality; it is to be hoped that the remainder will not relax their efforts to emulate the prize-winners. If ever the opportunity should present itself of making a fresh effort in the direction of associated marketing, and its promoters take warning from the fate of the Agency Society and the I.A.C., they will have a sufficient quantity of butter of the highest class to offer. Once that stage is reached, and public confidence has been created, the brand or trade mark will be as sure a guarantee of quality as the label on a bottle of Guinness's stout, and the brand will sell the butter. It may be a novel idea, but I do not think it fantastic to look forward to the day when Irish creamery butter will become a proprietary article.

Butter, possibly cheese, of which we now produce a considerable quantity (some of really high quality), and eggs, seem to me to be about the only farm produce which could be dealt with in "commodity marketing". Grain, mainly oats and barley, might, conceivably, be so dealt with. But the eternal difficulty of keeping the quality of the bulk up to the standard of the sample always confronts the co-operator. Commodity marketing is now a commonplace in most countries or Dominions whose area far exceeds ours and the inhabitants of which concentrate on the production of certain crops. In

some instances a measure of compulsion prevails, forcing the free-lances who would prefer to seek markets for themselves to come in with the majority. In almost every case there is compulsion, in some form or other, to restrain privateering. In every case the first care is standardisation. A carefully standardised product, as to which the standard is scrupulously maintained, can beat, every time, in competition, any heterogeneous collection of ungraded produce, even if much of the latter is superior in quality to the former. The reason is not far to seek. The consumer is usually a person of orderly mind and of conservative ways. He "likes his meals reg'lar". He wants to be sure that he gets every day in the week the same quality that he got on Monday. The orderly system of marketing standardised produce appeals to his instincts. He *might* get a choicer morsel in the unstandardised market or he might *not*. He has been stung in that market a few times by acquiring "bargains" of rank bad stuff. And, properly organised, there is no earthly reason why the orderly marketed produce should, in any instance, be inferior in quality to any that might be picked out of the heterogeneous lot. In all reason, and given care and common sense, it should invariably be superior.

It may seem very strange to outsiders that Ireland appears to have lagged so very far behind almost every other country in co-operative marketing. Even the creameries, by far the most imposing element in our movement, have utterly failed in their two attempts to market their product

collectively. The blood of the huxter seems to be so much in us that we hate to surrender the sale of what we produce, even to a man whom we know to be a better salesman than we are ourselves. We were born with the instinct of the fair and the market deeply implanted in us. And we have, apparently, inherited the secretiveness of the old people who would never reveal what they got for a beast or for their farm produce. So to-day, to my sorrow, we have the sad spectacle of competition between creameries, each of which conceal their hands as carefully from one another as Poker players. Each wires its offer to a prospective buyer without reference to the remainder. The prospective buyer lays the telegrams before him and, quality being equal, he buys from the cheapest. But has this one-sided bargain sanctity? True, it is one-sided only because we cannot work together. Should the market rise, the prospective buyer may whistle for his keenly bought butter. In that case he buys elsewhere and debits the defaulter with his loss. But he may whistle for that too. I have come across scores, even hundreds, of such instances in my time. It is not pleasant to write it, but, in the true interests of the movement, it is better to admit the truth. In undercutting one another in this fashion, the creameries must be acquitted of any conscious disloyalty. Their quotations were telegraphed in perfect good faith and without any intention of queering the pitch of any other. It was only when, in rising markets, they, and only a few of them, repudiated their contracts that bad faith

appeared. These instances were made the most of by the buyers. They, themselves, were by no means blameless. I came across endless cases, in falling markets, where merchants repudiated, or sought to repudiate, their bargains on the flimsiest pretext. I can only assume that dishonourable dealing had begotten its like. It matters little on which side it originated.

My readers may reasonably ask, why did not co-operative organisers attack the cattle trade? Until quite recently the export of fat and store cattle was Ireland's main industry. Whether it was good or ill that the country should have remained dependent so long on an industry that was, in itself, the negation of husbandry, is not for me to say. It was our chief export asset at all events.

Ever since I became a worker in the Co-operative Movement I have declaimed against the continuance of a system of sale in which the inexperienced, inexperienced seller pits his brains against those of the buyer, who has had none of the difficulties and risks of the producer to contend with and by long training and experience can run rings round him. It is odds on the buyer every time. The Markets and Fairs Act have provided that, wherever tolls were charged, a weigh-bridge should be erected by the toll-taking authority. But I have seen these expensive contraptions on fair-greens, red with rust, weeds growing over them, unused. The silly producer thought he could gauge the weight of his beast perfectly well without the aid of a weigh-bridge. And could the weigh-bridge tell him more

accurately than he fancied he knew of its value? Devil a bit!

In such circumstances could there be any possibility of co-operative sale, or even of co-operative auction marts, such as exist in England? The sellers are too numerous, too widely scattered and not organised at all. And the first essential of an organisation for sale is the organisation of its units into societies. Such an organisation was non-existent and was rendered practically impossible by the scatteredness of its potential membership.

I have always thought that the organisation of the co-operative sale of eggs and even of poultry was a possibility. A very few societies have gone in for it and with no very marked success. Ireland is a great egg-producing country, but, even to-day, its product is fated to compete with that of other countries less favourably circumstanced. I have tried to induce another body, "The United Irishwomen", to take up the reform of this industry which means so much to the wives and families of small farmers and labourers. As a matter of fact, the poultry industry comes next in importance to the industry of dairying, and while the latter can only be carried on successfully where the land and conditions are suitable, the hen, the duck and the goose are practically ubiquitous. In my younger days I used to hear it said that "twenty hens are equal to one cow". If the breed of the poultry generally were improved to the proper standard, the number of eggs could be enormously increased and also the quality of the fowls for table purposes. Apart from the additional

wealth which such an improvement would yield, there would be a distinct and much needed amelioration in the dietary of the people. It seems strange with so many agencies for raising the standard of living, both governmental and voluntary, that so very little appears to have been accomplished, although the need is so great.

There is even a greater need for providing the population with a plentiful supply of good, pure milk at a reasonable price. In the cities and towns, the lack of this most essential food is simply deplorable. It is not only insufficient in quantity but also often inferior in quality, while the retail price is so high that poor mothers of large families have to deny their children more than a little of the sustenance that they should have in abundance. So, in the towns there is the sad spectacle of hundreds of little children, few of normal size and strength, many suffering from rickets, or other ailments, due to malnutrition. Butter-making has become the last resource of the dairy farmer. As this is written, he is receiving less than  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. per gallon for his milk on an average, in the best of the creameries, plus the separated milk returned free. I am convinced that many would gladly dispose of a considerable proportion for a slightly higher price, which would enable a properly organised distributing agency to retail it at a price which would place it within reach of the very poorest of the people.

Strange as it may seem, milk scarcity is not entirely confined to the cities and towns. In quite a number of creamery areas I have heard well-



founded complaints that the woman of the house cannot get "a drop of new milk to colour the tay". If a goat or two is kept, to graze on the "long farm", the owners become anathema to occupiers whose farms are fenced with quicks, for a couple of goats can destroy a hawthorn hedge in a remarkably short time. Milk being difficult to get, even sour milk in many places, the present-day housewife has almost abandoned bread-making altogether and now relies on baker's bread, a very poor substitute.

During the War years, a good many creameries took up cheese-making with varying degrees of success. When the shortage became acute and the cheese was "pooled", the incentive to make really good cheese disappeared, and, in a number of creameries, the methods became slipshod, with the result that the cheese produced in such cases was of very poor quality. Any reputation previously gained by the well-managed creameries as producers of good cheese was soon destroyed and Irish cheese earned a bad name which clung to it long after the last shot had been fired. Here and there are to be found, after nearly twenty years, the War-time cheese factories, with their vats, presses and other equipment, rusting away. Comparatively recently, several of the more progressive creameries have taken up cheese-making anew and are turning out a really fine product. A few have gone in for "processed" cheese and have found it very remunerative.

The general belief is that Irish people do not like

cheese and that it will never become a popular article of diet. Of this I have great doubts. They may not realise that cheese is the best of all substitutes for meat, and it may take them some time to acquire the habit of eating it, or of relishing it. Be this as it may, the wife of a very prominent co-operator learned the art of cheese-making and succeeded in producing the most delicious "Wensleydale" I have ever eaten—as good as that produced in its place of origin, Yorkshire. She also made splendid Cheddar. Her husband was a large employer of labour on his demesne. Each workman was handed, as an experiment, a piece of cheese at his dinner. Some ate it, others examined it with curiosity and decided to take it home. There it was pounced upon and devoured with avidity by the children. To cut it short, the time soon came when the workmen were unwilling to go out until the cheese ration was forthcoming. They had found it pleasant to eat and most sustaining as a food. It was a remarkable verification of the saying, *L'appétit vient en mangeant*. In a Catholic country a variant such as cheese would be welcome where fresh fish cannot be had and the choice lies between the thirst-provoking Shetland ling and the "salty" herring. Most children eat cheese readily. Apart from its novelty, Nature attracts them to it. Where they have to attend school for many long hours, after a long walk there, to be retraced after lessons are over, often with nothing but a piece of dry bread to sustain them throughout the day, a couple of ounces of good cheese would make all the difference

in the world. I hope this suggestion may reach those who are humanely interested in child-welfare and especially those whose chief care is meals for school children. Having acquired the cheese-eating habit while young, it would stick to them in after life and greatly to their benefit.

And why not try a cheese ration in our Free State Army? It is easy to serve and requires no cooking.

It may be said that I have wandered far from the subjects indicated by this chapter-heading. I do not think so. All the matters I have dealt with are most distinctly relevant. In every dairying country but Ireland cheese-making has had a prominent place; and now we have become a cheese-producing country. If we may not export it, why should we not teach our people its value as a food and induce them to eat it? But it must, and can, be produced at a price which will enable people of small means to buy it. I believe I am correct in saying that, even at such a moderate price, cheese would pay better than butter. I may be asked about the whey. In other countries, especially Denmark, where pig-feeding has been reduced to an exact science, it has been found that the best bacon is produced from pigs fed upon barley-meal and whey. Both are Irish products and can be just as profitably used here as there. Moreover, there are now several methods of utilising whey as an ingredient in the manufacture of food for live-stock which have been proved to be both satisfactory and profitable.

## CHAPTER XIX

The Creamery Managers—Their Importance—  
The I.C.M.A.—A fine Record of Public Service  
not always adequately recognised

No account of the Agricultural Co-operative Movement would be complete without some reference to that very important body of men who to-day manage the Irish co-operative creameries—probably, outside the learned professions, the most highly educated class in the community, though not always rewarded according to their deserts. The present-day creamery manager is required to have received a very complete technical and scientific training, for butter-making is no longer carried on by the rule of thumb but has become an exact science. Accordingly, most of the more recently appointed men to these positions have undergone a lengthy period of university training as well as a practical course in an approved creamery. The system of book-keeping is necessarily very elaborate and the creamery manager must be a master of its details, even where a trained book-keeper is employed, as is the case usually in large creameries. In one respect, alone, would it appear that the education and training of the creamery manager is lacking—a thorough grounding in and a complete understanding and

appreciation of co-operative principles without which he is merely a well-trained business man. Now that the majority of creameries in Ireland are co-operative, it is of even greater importance than ever that their managers should have been taught to realise all that differentiates them from ordinary commercial undertakings and also the fundamental principles upon which a co-operative movement must rest and upon the strict observance of which it only can succeed. It cannot be greatly wondered at if the creamery managers as a class, conscious of their educational superiority as compared with that of the committees which employ them, now and then exhibit a tendency to domineer over their committees. Where this tendency is allowed to grow and the manager is given too free a hand, there is always danger lurking, not only for the creamery but also for the manager himself. In the very early days, I found instances of this, where an apathetic or incapable committee had allowed an over-confident manager too much freedom, with the result that the creamery in question became, in a short while, a one-man show. I invariably gave such managers a friendly warning to the effect that, as long as all went well, they would doubtless be regarded as the "white-headed boys", but, if anything went wrong, they would inevitably jeopardise their positions simply because they had not taken their committees into their confidence and implicated every member in all responsibilities which they had assumed. The managers usually saw the wisdom of my advice and

accepted it. A few, however, either resented or ignored it, with the result that, sooner or later, trouble of the kind I indicated ensued. For this condition of things, the committees were at least as much to blame as the managers, if indeed they were not the more blameworthy.

While the committees could not be expected to be able to follow all the intricate technical details of the business, they were seldom lacking in ordinary shrewdness, but there were sometimes things overlooked by them which it is quite impossible to excuse. Probably the most serious of all was their failure to insist on all possible business being done with the trade federation of the movement, for that was a matter of principle. This failure on the part of any manager, when left to himself, to give consistent and loyal support to the co-operative trade federation, was clearly due to his not having been instructed in co-operative principles rather than to any disposition to give his society's business to a non-co-operative concern. In the absence of such necessary instruction, it was not to be wondered at that some should fail to differentiate between the co-operative federation and its competitors. The chief concern of the creamery committee was, generally speaking, to see that the uttermost fraction was paid for the milk. Where the anxiety for high prices was greater than usual, the manager was sometimes forced to fake his monthly milk estimates in the early part of the year, during which period very few creameries ever earn a profit, so that he might not end

up the year with a loss. This was of course wrong, but after all, in extenuation, the manager who faked his estimates was merely protecting his committee from the consequences of their own greed. The almost invariable competition which used to exist between neighbouring creameries provided an additional spur and frequently led to the paying of prices which were wholly unjustified and, worse still, in some instances, to a very elaborate plan of manipulating milk tests so as to make it appear that a creamery was paying more for butterfat than was really the case. Very few of my readers would understand how this was accomplished, even if I were to explain it in detail; but all who ever had an experience of creameries will understand the reference. This evil practice was almost altogether confined to a comparatively small area in the south; at all events I never came across a case of it in the north or west, where the creameries were much further apart than in "The Golden Vein", in which area proximity engendered competition and, in its turn, malpractices such as I have mentioned. Possibly the worst of these was the custom of paying higher prices to milk suppliers in the outskirts of the area, in order to keep them from sending their milk elsewhere, than were paid to those whose farms were adjacent to the creamery and who had no choice but to supply their milk to it.

Few of the creamery managers of forty years ago still remain. But there are some who have managed to keep abreast of the times and retain their

positions owing to the fact that they have given faithful service. I know them all, for they are all old friends, but it would be invidious for me to mention them by name, except perhaps one—Mr. Denis Ryan of Lombardstown—the doyen of his profession. Forty years ago and more Denis Ryan and I laboured over the intricacies of his accounts. Many Saturday afternoons, while I was living in Mallow, did I laboriously cycle out to Lombardstown to try and bring the puzzling figures into some sort of order for presentation to the next ensuing committee meeting. I may have longed to spend these afternoons otherwise, but I was keen on making Lombardstown what it now is, a general and generous provider of all the needs of a very needy countryside. Neither Denis Ryan nor myself had much lore as book-keepers, but by degrees we managed between us to evolve a fairly simple system which enabled him to give his committee a sufficiently clear statement of accounts. In a lesser degree, I performed the same functions in other creameries and with a certain measure of success.

The idea occurred to the few creamery managers then existent to form an association. This was the genesis of the present Irish Creamery Managers' Association. I was its first President. I think its first meeting was held in Charleville, and the next few meetings in Limerick, after which it used to meet in Dublin. Then, owing to the pressure of other work, my place was taken by a creamery manager, Mr. M. A. O'Callaghan, of Castle-



mahon, who afterwards held a high position in the creamery industry in Australia. The Irish Creamery Managers' Association to-day is an important body. The Association is essentially and primarily a trades union. Recently, the attitude assumed by a certain, relatively small, section of the I.C.M.A. has become almost that of dictators. This minority, and it is only a small minority, has attempted to arrogate the right to the manager to dictate to his employers in matters that have no relation whatever to his status or pay. This attitude has, in a few cases, created a feeling of hostility between creamery committees and their managers, which is much to be deplored. Generally speaking, however, the utmost harmony exists between the committees and the managers. In thus criticising, I am fully aware that I shall myself come in for criticism by the section of the Association to which I have referred. Nevertheless I shall say that the present policy of that minority of the I.C.M.A. has estranged many of its former supporters and is absolutely wrong and indefensible. The Irish creamery managers are a valuable body of public servants, but those whom they permit to act as their spokesmen should realise that they are not the owners of the creameries they manage. Their position and training should make each of them the most important person in his district. They have it in their power to become, as indeed several have become, the recognised leaders of agricultural and economic thought and development in their respective localities.

Jobbery has always, unhappily, been a defect in our national character, although I cannot agree that Ireland has been worse in this respect than other countries. With us jobbery is seldom, if ever, the result of corruption but is due to a good-natured desire to help a "neighbour's child", even to the extent of cramming a hopelessly square peg into the roundest of holes. The early creameries did not escape, and in the appointment of their managers, those candidates who were fortunate enough to have several relatives on the committees, were too often selected for this reason alone, and with but little regard to their essential qualifications. I remember one case where a broken-down farmer, who had many relatives on the committee, was appointed to manage a large and important creamery. He was utterly incompetent—a snivelling, weak-kneed creature. I protested vainly against putting such a man in charge of the concern. I was told he'd starve, otherwise, that he was a "decent fellow", a "neighbour's son", and so on. Before very long I had a piteous letter from the poor devil, asking me to visit him. So I went and found, as I anticipated, that everything was in a hideous mess, the books not written up, the creamery and machinery filthy and the engine-driver smoking his pipe while he conducted a flirtation with the dairymaid over a tub of freshly churned butter. I ordered the flirtatious one to put out his pipe, which he did, sullenly. Then I listened to the miscalled "manager's" tale of woe. "The engine-driver is insubordinate", said he plaintively. "So's the dairy-

maid; but the chairman is the most insubordinate — of the lot!" Of course he had to go, but not before the milk supply had dwindled by half and had been permanently transferred to other creameries. It would have been far cheaper to have given this incompetent a pension out of the creamery funds, as I had suggested in despair at the time of his appointment, when I saw the committee were bent on it, than to have allowed him to wreck the business. Happily, this was a rare and extreme case; but there were far too many of the square pegs in round holes for years afterwards.

Cases of personal dishonesty have been extremely few and where they did occur they have been largely due to the laxity of the committees. One remarkable case I remember was where a manager, never regarded as being particularly bright, succeeded in eluding the vigilance of a very painstaking auditor and by clever falsification of his accounts succeeded in showing a most prosperous balance sheet where as a matter of fact his society was on the verge of insolvency. By not one penny did this foolish man benefit personally. The unfortunate position in which he found his society had so wounded his vanity that, in order to present it in glowing colours, he had for a long time concocted a most elaborate series of fictitious accounts which only led to his ultimate dismissal and a narrow escape from criminal proceedings.

In too few cases have creamery committees recognised the merits of a really good manager by providing him with a comfortable modern resi-

dence adjacent to the creamery, though this unwise neglect is being to some extent repaired. But there are still cases where a creamery manager is forced to live at some distance from his work. Usually, his only means of locomotion is a bicycle. Creameries have to start work early in the morning and in all sorts of weather. A manager arriving drenched to his work is in no sort of condition to face the toil of a long day. The provision of a manager's residence is a very sound investment and it goes a very long way towards making these useful public servants contented with their position and unwilling to change it.

In all the societies formed by the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, there is a provision in the rules for the allocation of a certain proportion of the surplus to the staff as a bonus on their salaries or wages. Only in a comparatively few instances is this excellent principle observed, at all events in its entirety. I have met managers who themselves objected to the provision on the grounds that the somewhat problematical bonus militated against the fixing of their salaries at a reasonable figure. There may be something in this, as farmers, whose lives are hard and whose incomes are perilously insecure, are at times inclined to be niggardly. It is somewhat rare to find a committee whose members are far-seeing and wise enough to pay a really good man who is in charge of the most important part of their industry a salary greater than the income they themselves draw from their farms; still less are they willing to admit the right

of the efficient and faithful employee to participate in a share of the surplus which his work has created. We are not singular in this respect. In most Co-operative Movements, the remuneration of those who manage or direct the business is decidedly on a low scale. In England, we find the directors of the C.W.S., the largest trading corporation in the world, surrendering all other sources of income to accept a yearly stipend of £750. Democratic institutions are not infrequently mean in their rewards for really valuable service. I have known directors of the C.W.S., able, earnest men, who would be gladly accepted at twice or thrice their modest co-operative fees, in any ordinary commercial undertaking; and, though themselves realising this, they have, to their lasting honour, refused to exchange co-operative service for other and better rewarded employment. On the other hand, these poorly paid directors realise that expert service must be rewarded by its full market value, so they pay salaries to expert buyers and others far in excess of their own emoluments. In that respect they evince greater business intelligence than those who elect them.

While it must be admitted that no money can buy loyal devotion to any cause, however fine, I cannot help feeling that a more generous recognition of proved merit could not, by any stretch of imagination, lessen the enthusiasm of co-operative workers.

In the Irish Agricultural Co-operative Movement there is no provision for pensions, nor is there

much prospect for them in the near future. The salaries paid are usually but a living wage, out of which even the most thrifty cannot possibly provide adequately for sickness, disability or old age. And yet the co-operative employee is just as much a public servant, and often far more valuable to the country, than the average Government official whose old age is fully provided for. It is not to be wondered at that this circumstance frequently leads to comparisons between voluntary and Government service and, usually, to the disparagement of the former. While the disparity cannot altogether be removed, co-operative bodies ought, in common justice, and in their own interest, to do all in their power to render their service more attractive. There can be no doubt but that the response would well repay the relatively small outlay involved.

## CHAPTER XX

### The Evolution of the Modern Creamery—Remediable Defects—The Value of good “Window-dressing”

THE buildings and equipment of the early creameries were primitive in the extreme. The former were bare, ugly, barn-like structures, a partition wall dividing the engine-room from the dairy proper. The power was derived in most cases from a vertical boiler and engine, few having the capital necessary to install the better type of horizontal engine and locomotive boiler. A steel chimney, stayed by wires, conveyed the smoke and waste steam upwards and gave the necessary draught to the fire-box. At one end of the creamery building a milk-receiving platform was erected, three or four feet from the ground, and the milk was measured, not weighed, before being poured into the receiving vat, too often without being properly strained. The remainder of the equipment comprised one or more Petersen separators, heavy, clumsy machines of small capacity and requiring 4 h.p. to drive. A water tank, about three feet deep, ran the length of the building at one side and in this the cream, as it was separated, was immersed in Schwartz pans made of tinned steel each containing 9 gallons. In some creameries was found the

Holstein churn, a vertical type, but in most cases the cheaper barrel churn was installed. Last of all came a rotary butter-table on which the butter was worked under fluted rollers as the table revolved. Provision for milk-testing was of the most primitive description. For quite a long time the only method was to place a measured sample of the milk in a graduated tube and let it stand until the stratum of risen cream could be measured on the scale. This supposed test was found to be no test at all. A very laborious and equally unreliable plan was to test a certain quantity of milk by churning in a small rotary churn. Very naturally, dairymaids objected to the job and often performed it in a very perfunctory manner. In no creamery that I came across were these test-churns operated, as they might easily have been, by a drive from the shafting. Once I heard of a case where a likely young farmer had so interested the comely dairymaid in his material affairs that she was suspected of having surreptitiously put into his sample of milk in the test churn a not inconsiderable pat of butter! After a while a simple type of Babcock tester was introduced which was a great improvement on the former clumsy and unreliable methods, and this, in its turn, gave way to the Gerber tester which is to-day used in the majority of creameries. I think I am correct in saying that only in the Maypole Dairy Company's creameries, grouped around Knocklong, was the Leffman-Beam method of testing, which I had found almost universal in Sweden, employed. By slow degrees the cumbersome Peter-



sen separator gave way to the Laval—the forerunner of the Alpha-Laval—and to the Alexandra, the chief feature of which was a concave bowl sitting on the top of a spindle and revolved by friction. As both the Alexandra and the Laval only required half the horse-power to drive that was needed by the Petersen, while both at least equalled its capacity, they soon superseded the latter. The Alexandra was universally installed in the C.W.S. creameries, but a great scare was raised against this machine because, in one instance, the bowl and spindle, owing to imperfect lubrication, had seized, and the bowl was hurled, like a high-explosive shell, through the wall of the creamery. When it is remembered that both these types of separator had a speed of 6000 revolutions per minute the devastating effect of such an accident can easily be understood. The makers of the Laval separator then increased its skimming capacity by the introduction of a number of slightly conical steel plates inside the bowl. These plates divided the milk into thin films which greatly facilitated the centrifugal separation of the fat globules from the milk. Other dairy-engineering firms followed suit as soon as they could do so without infringement of patent rights, and to-day there are several separators in use which are at least equal, if not superior to, the Alpha-Laval, notably the Westphalia. To the makers of the Alpha-Laval machine must, however, be freely accorded the credit for their invention.

It was before long found necessary to discard the sloppy method of pouring the milk when

delivered into a measuring-drum and then tilting the contents into the milk-receiving vat, so weighing machines were introduced which, more or less accurately, recorded the quantity of milk supplied by each individual. The condition in which the milk was received left much to be desired; sometimes it was sour and, occasionally, tainted from having been brought in imperfectly cleansed cans. The strainer now and then revealed strange foreign objects, straws, manure, feathers, even snails. I heard of a "pinkeen" (stickleback) being found on one occasion, but I did not hear what explanation of the tiny fish's presence was offered by the supplier! The lot of the manager who had to deal with such a milk supply was certainly not a happy one. Sometimes the worst offenders were members of the committee, with whom he was forced to deal as gently as possible or else jeopardise his position. It is greatly to the credit of the managers that they never allowed even the chairman of the society to escape without censure, though it might have had to be somewhat restrained. I frequently found that greater strictness as to condition of the milk was enforced in the cases of those suppliers whose farms were adjacent to the creamery than in the cases of those suppliers who lived on the outer edge of the creamery area and had another creamery, just as near, where they might expect more laxity. The neighbouring suppliers had no alternative and could therefore be dealt with more firmly.

All this is changed now. The Department of Agriculture's inspectors relieve the manager of the

unpleasant duty of rejecting milk which is impure or stale. I remember I was eternally lecturing members of creameries at the meetings I attended on the enormity of the offence of supplying any but pure, fresh milk, pointing out that the care taken by ninety-nine righteous men could be nullified by one transgressor, whose fate, I added, should be ostracism by the whole community when detected. There may have been some Pharisees in my audiences but all applauded my condemnation of the wrongdoer.

To return to the gradual evolution of the creamery which we see to-day: it was found necessary to introduce milk heaters to raise the temperature of the milk before separation to a point which would ensure clean skimming, in fact leaving only a trace of fat in the separated milk. The Schwartz pans and cooling troughs were scrapped and their place taken by cream vats accommodated in a suitable room. Then it was seen that butter of uniform quality could not be produced unless a pure lactic acid culture were introduced into the cream which had to be previously pasteurised. So cream pasteurisers were installed and, after them, a very expensive cooling plant, first, of the ammonia compression type, but subsequently the refrigerator using CO<sub>2</sub>. (This substitution for ammonia was mainly due to the danger of a possible escape of gas, the odour of which would destroy all the cream in the vats, and, now and then, such escapes had occurred.)

The recommendation of the Departmental

Committee on Butter Regulations, of which I was a member, had stated that where butter contained moisture (water) in excess of 16 per cent the presumption was raised that it was adulterated. This recommendation was adopted and enforced by Act of Parliament. It had therefore become absolutely necessary, in order to keep the percentage of water within the prescribed limit and also to produce butter of sufficient firmness to travel safely and cut up well, that churning temperatures should be reduced. Hitherto lumps of ice, not always of absolute purity, had been put into the churn, but this device so injured its interior that it had to give way to the vastly superior method of cooling the cream after ripening in the vats by means of coils in which chilled brine circulated. The combined churn and butter-worker then made its appearance, various types being placed on the market, and the old rotary butter-table was added to the scrap-heap. The need for returning the milk in good condition for calf and pig feeding led to the installation of skim-milk pasteurisers and also of apparatus for preventing the frothing of the skim milk when delivered to the suppliers. In every creamery, no matter how careful the staff may be, there is always a good deal of milk splashed about the floor. When this is augmented by great masses of milk in a condition of froth it follows that the effluent from the creamery becomes milk and water. The difficulty of disposing of this effluent without causing serious pollution soon became apparent. The effluent, harmless enough as

it issued from the creamery, speedily developed most unpleasant characteristics; its decomposition was exceedingly slow and the stench from the ditches or streams into which it had been conveyed grew in intensity until they bid fair to rival the greatest known stink in the agricultural world—the foul odour of the flax pits of Ulster. Worse than that was to follow. Farmers complained that their cattle had died from drinking the water in the polluted streams. Costly actions for damages ensued, sometimes decided one way, sometimes the other. The issue was generally determined by the evidence of the expert witness who could swear hardest. Meantime, the creamery washings poisoned the air and proved absolutely intractable and proof against septic tanks, filter-beds, and every known method hitherto successfully applied to the foulest of sewage.

Once, in the early morning, before breakfast, I accepted the invitation of a budding, but too cocksure, scientist who claimed so stoutly that he had solved the problem that I almost hoped he might be able to deliver us from this evil. He took me to a long series of filter-beds, from each of which the liquid, pea-green in the first, passed on to the next, each time losing something of its colour but, as far as I could gather with the aid of my nose, little, if any, of its fragrance. At the last tank, where the liquid was only faintly discoloured, he invited me to *taste* it! I declined with thanks; the sickening odour was too overpowering. This heroic person took a palmful of the stuff, and swallowed it with-

out a grimace! Then he told me with pride that the purified (?) effluent would next be discharged into a small stream near by. This was done, and, shortly afterwards, one of the riparian farmers brought an action against the expert's creamery and cast them in damages. Unhappily, this nuisance is still with us, though it has been greatly abated. Short of evaporation, which would be extremely costly, there seems to be no completely successful system of dealing effectively with the problem. Precipitation of the casein has been tried, but the liquid remaining still retains its unpleasant and obstinate characteristics. Conveyed into a stream of sufficient size it does not appear to be harmful to fish, but even in a large stream, an ugly flocculent growth is sure to appear in a little while.

While the internal equipment of the best of our creameries leaves little to be desired, for it is now equal to that of creameries in any country, the buildings themselves have remained pretty much as before, ugly and unsymmetrical. Internally, they are usually poorly finished and unattractive. Their utilitarian purpose seems to have completely overshadowed every other consideration. In but few cases has any attempt been made, if not to beautify, at all events to mitigate the ugliness of their bare and untidy surroundings. A few flowering shrubs and beds of flowers, creepers on the grim, bare walls, would make all the difference in the world. The stark erections for the sanitary accommodation of the staff, demanded by the Factory Acts, stick up aggressively like sentry boxes at either end

of the enclosure, instead of being decently concealed by such quick-growing trees as *Cypressus macracarpa*. There is no excuse for this ugliness, this amazing lack of taste. While it continues we can feel no real pride in pointing out to visitors those grim structures in which one of our principal industries is carried on. And when it is remembered that butter, perhaps the most sensitive of all food products, is their main product and that the buyer, or potential buyer, has become daily more fastidious in his taste, is it likely that he will leave our creameries with a good impression? It is, perhaps, a small matter, though I do not consider it in that light. I regard our neglect as a serious reflection on our national taste and of our appreciation of beauty, tidiness and decency. This sloppiness, this slovenliness, does not stop at the outside of the creamery, unfortunately. It pervades many of the interiors and is evidenced by untidily wrapped rolls, soiled butter boxes, by neglect to keep the bright parts of the machinery shining, by stains on the walls, by endless little things which must catch anybody's eye. Though the dress of the workers has improved very much, the majority refuse to wear the sensible, anti-rheumatic clog and shamble about the wet floor in wet leather boots. Where they wear overalls they are frequently soiled. And why should the engine-man destroy his clothes with grease when a suit of dungarees costs only a few shillings?

Enough of this dismal diatribe. We have improved a great deal, but there is still much room for

more, for scrupulous neatness and cleanliness, for meticulous attention to detail. Let us have done with the old expression, "Ah, sure it's good enough!" Nothing is good enough; nothing quite so good that it might not be bettered. I am honestly proud of our creameries and of their success, and it is because of that very pride that I have pointed out some shortcomings which, if remedied, would, I believe, make all the difference in the world. I can only liken this neglect to serving a gourmet with ortolans in aspic on a dirty plate, or asking him to drink his *Veuve Clicquot* out of a dirty beer glass!

Skilful and artistic "window-dressing" is an asset which is highly prized by every good shopkeeper, by every trader, with the exception of our butchers, whose gory exhibits are a disgrace to civilisation and a strong incitement to vegetarianism. An attractive cover will often sell an article of doubtful value or quality. The beautifying of the exterior of our creameries in the way suggested will cost but little: the extra attention to cleanliness, neatness and order in the interior, nothing at all.



## CHAPTER XXI

Mr. P. Hogan's Creamery Act 1928—Buying  
Out the Proprietors — The Dairy Disposal  
Company

THE Department of Agriculture, during Mr. P. Hogan's term of office as Minister, was responsible for a very important development. The Irish Agricultural Organisation Society had represented that the existence of proprietary creameries side by side with those worked on co-operative lines, together with the fact that there were too many creameries of both kinds, had led to a most undesirable competition for milk supplies, even between the co-operatives themselves. The existence of unnecessary, or "redundant", creameries tended to increase the cost of production and therefore to diminish the price which could be paid for milk. Of the proprietary concerns, the most numerous and important groups were owned by the Condensed Milk Company of Ireland and the Newmarket Dairy Company. The Dail having voted the necessary funds, the Department of Agriculture acquired by purchase the creameries owned by these two bodies and, shortly afterwards, several other smaller groups. A body called the Dairy Disposal Company, Limited, was set up with the object of operating the acquired proprietary creameries until

they could be transferred to co-operative dairy societies organised by the I.A.O.S. A considerable number were thus transferred to co-operative ownership. Those that were regarded as redundant, in some cases co-operatively owned and worked, were closed and their milk supplies diverted to other concerns where it was needed and it could be satisfactorily dealt with. At the outset it was understood that the Dairy Disposal Company was only going to be a temporary body, but it was soon realised that the transfer of such large concerns as the Condenseries at Lansdowne (Limerick), Tipperary and Knocklong to co-operative societies of farmers was a transaction of too great a magnitude to be feasible. Consequently, the Dairy Disposal Company still operates these concerns and, in addition, a considerable number of creameries of the ordinary type which it is desirable should be transferred at as early a date as possible to properly constituted co-operative societies. Otherwise, the acquisition of these creameries from their former proprietors and their continued operation as proprietary creameries, even though the Government, or a semi-Government body, as is the Dairy Disposal Company, is their proprietor, is merely perpetuating the very system which Mr. Hogan's Creamery Act 1928 was passed to abolish. It is admitted on all sides that the management of the creameries worked by the Dairy Disposal Company is good; it is also stated that there has been no desire evinced by the farmers to acquire them. From a purely co-operative point of view, such

considerations must be dismissed. In the early days of the Co-operative Movement, the creameries owned by the Maypole Dairy Company were probably better managed than the average co-operative concern, while only in a few places did the farmers spontaneously display any anxiety to buy out the proprietor. Had the co-operative organisers allowed this state of apathy to continue, there would have been no co-operative creameries and the unorganised dairy farmers would, to this day, have continued to be exploited by creamery proprietors who would probably have created a monopoly, powerful and rich enough to keep the cow-owners in subjection without hope of escape.

Bodies such as the Dairy Disposal Company, even when only intended to be temporary, have a way of becoming permanent. The main objection to such a system, admirable as it may be from a purely commercial point of view, is that it is utterly subversive of the co-operative ideal. And, even looking at it from the standpoint of the economist, it has serious defects. Butter-making is not, nor should it be, the be-all and end-all of the co-operative dairy society. In the localities referred to, the cow-owners have a capital invested in their farms, farm-buildings and dairy herds which exceeds by, perhaps, fifty times, the capital invested in the creamery and its equipment. Nevertheless the cow-owners have surrendered their dairying business to the new proprietor, and, not only that, but they have also abandoned their title to be called co-operators, for they have

ceased to co-operate for any of the purposes which engage the activities of any well-managed and progressive co-operative society. They have reverted to the conditions under which they lived forty years ago and from which it took much strenuous work to emancipate them. It is certain that this retrogression was never desired by the author of the Creamery Act 1928 and never intended. It may be conceded that such large concerns as the Condensed Milk Factories, with their highly technical and complicated processes, are at present beyond the reach of their ownership by co-operating farmers. It is probably true of to-day. But, if the movement was what it now should be, the acquisition of this industry need not be left to private or even Government enterprise. Even as things stand, provided the industry could be proved to be worth acquiring, there is money enough in the movement to acquire it, while expert management and scientific knowledge can be as well secured by an intelligently directed farmers' organisation as by any other corporation. Farmers in other countries have tackled and dealt successfully with businesses of at least equal magnitude. British co-operators, by loyalty and determination, have presented to the world the greatest examples of co-operative federation ever seen in the Co-operative Wholesale Society of Manchester and the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society of Glasgow, beside whose gigantic and magnificent achievements the acquisition of the not inconsiderable milk-condensing industry must seem a

very insignificant matter. The milk-condensing industry is of considerable importance to the creameries, especially to those which have surplus whole, or separated, milk. This being so only provides another argument for placing it under co-operative control. The farmers supplying milk to the Dairy Disposal Company's creameries appear to be satisfied with the price they receive, and it is probably the case, for they are unquestionably well managed and, in most cases, have an ample milk supply. Moreover, in their purchases of creamery requisites, these creameries enjoy an advantage only shared by the wealthier of the co-operatives. They have ample capital and can buy all their requirements for cash and therefore at bedrock prices.

Leaving the "big business" of condensing out of the question for the present, at all events, is it not high time that many of those creameries taken over by the Dairy Disposal Company, ostensibly as a temporary measure, were now offered to the farmers at a fair arbitration price? A satisfactory arrangement for the payment of the purchase money need present no great difficulty. Such facilities have been afforded in the past and the conditions have been satisfactorily fulfilled. The existing staffs, which appear to be entirely efficient, could be taken over by the co-operative societies formed, in each case, without any detriment to their salaries or status. If, after a reasonable time had been allowed to the I.A.O.S. to organise dairy societies to take over the Dairy Disposal Company's creameries, it were found that the

farmers did not respond, the project might be abandoned. All that is contended for is that the farmers and the I.A.O.S. should be given the opportunity. The work of organisation was always far more difficult in the old days where the farmers had been milk suppliers to a proprietary creamery than in those districts where no creamery existed, because they had become content with the poor prices and were only too happy to leave the cares and worries of creamery management to the proprietor. Organisation will certainly prove even more difficult in the case of the Dairy Disposal Company's creameries where the suppliers have been well treated and the management was good. Unless we are prepared to see a new form of socialism, direct trading by the State, substituted for co-operation in the Irish Free State, unless we are ready to recant our beliefs in the latter, we must continue to press for the re-admission of the non-co-operating milk suppliers into the movement, more especially in those cases where creameries, formerly worked on co-operative lines, are now under the control of the Dairy Disposal Company.

It must not be assumed that any attack is made upon the Company in question. Its necessity was obvious and it has accomplished an important and difficult task in a manner highly creditable to those who direct its operations and to its working staff. The fact remains that, the more efficient the Company proves itself to be, the less will the milk-supplying farmers evince any desire to co-operate.

Past experience shows that, in the majority of cases, Irish farmers are not by nature inclined to take the initiative; that they only do so where propaganda convinces them, and then after much persuasion. Notwithstanding this apathy towards co-operation, which is largely due to lack of self-reliance and of confidence in their ability to conduct any business of considerable size, once they are induced to take it up, to realise all the benefits it can confer and the almost infinite possibilities of its development, members of such societies as are successful and progressive develop a pride in, and a very real appreciation of, the advantages conferred by membership. No such society would voluntarily surrender the control of any part of its business to any outside body. If its members were not, in the first instance, inspired by any enthusiasm for co-operation, the success of their society and all it means to them have made them ultimately co-operatively minded. This being so, it is a matter for regret that a great many of the creameries in question should not be worked as co-operative societies so that they, too, might develop their activities along the lines followed by those which have made a success of their business.

There is a further reason why it is desirable that every creamery in the Free State should be an independent co-operative unit. Governments change. Government policy frequently undergoes drastic changes even when there is no change in the administration. It is clear that the present Government regards the co-operative movement

benevolently and has given many substantial proofs of its goodwill; but there is no guarantee, nor can there be any, of permanency. The ultimate issue lies with the farmers themselves. If they demand the transfer of the Dairy Disposal Company's creameries to co-operative societies of milk suppliers, it is almost inconceivable that their claim could be rejected. But, as has already been emphasised, it is most unlikely that such a demand will be made spontaneously. If it is ever put forward, it will be only after a period of strenuous effort by the I.A.O.S., and that body could not possibly attempt so difficult a task unless it were first assured that the organisation of co-operative dairy societies in the districts referred to would be followed by the transfer to those societies of the creameries in question. No move, therefore, can be taken until there is a clear declaration of policy on the matter by the Ministry of Agriculture.



## CHAPTER XXII

### Co-operative Credit — “The Capitalisation of Honesty”

PROBABLY the most interesting feature in the varied programme of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society to the student of co-operation will be the Credit Societies. At a very early stage, and acting on the advice of Mr. Henry W. Wolff, it was decided to adopt the plan of Herr Raiffeisen and form our little credit societies on the unlimited liability principle. The scheme followed very simple lines. The membership was very carefully selected, none but industrious and temperate persons of known probity being admitted. As it was essential that all the members should be known to one another, the area from which membership was drawn was usually restricted to the confines of a parish or half parish, or a three-mile radius from the place of meeting. All members made themselves personally liable for the entire debts of the society. Loans were restricted to £50 and seldom amounted to so much. It was usually found that they averaged out at £20 to £25. Money was only lent for reproductive purposes or to effect an economy, the object being to teach the borrowers the difference between “borrowing to spend” and “borrowing to make”.

When a loan was granted, the borrower had to provide two sureties who, besides being personally liable for repayment, were held responsible for the borrower's promise that the money lent should be applied solely to the declared purpose and be repaid immediately that the purpose had been fulfilled. The purpose had always to be approved by the committee who also determined the period for which the money should be lent. For example, a loan might be granted for the purchase of young pigs and for such length of time as would enable the borrower to dispose of them when fat. If a loan were granted for the purchase of fertilisers and seeds, the period for repayment was extended to the date upon which the resultant crop would be harvested. Loans granted for the purchase of milch cows, whose milk would be sent to a neighbouring creamery, were allowed to be repaid in instalments spread over a period of perhaps a year and a half, in order that the borrower might be enabled to make repayment out of the profit derived from his investment. Loans to be repaid in bulk were only granted for a maximum period of twelve months. Occasionally, a person indebted to a local trader, and obliged to pay usurious interest on his debt, or to pay extortionate prices for his requirements, applied for a loan to enable him to rid himself of his burden. Such cases were very carefully investigated and loans were only granted where the committee had no doubt as to the merits of the application and the credit-worthiness of the applicant. The declared purpose in such cases was

usually the holding over of stock not yet ready for marketing or whose sale was postponed because of a slump in price.

Interest on loans was charged at the rate of 5 per cent—one penny per £ per month, as a rule, though when money was tight the rate rose to 1¼d. No renewals of loans were granted in the early days of the credit societies, though this practice afterwards became common enough.

At first it was difficult to get people to join these societies. The instinct to keep their financial affairs to themselves had become part of their nature and they often preferred the secrecy of the transaction with the gombeen man, and the obligation to pay his high rate of interest, to putting their private affairs before a committee composed of their neighbours, even when the priest of the parish was chairman. To these simple, but nevertheless canny folk it might not always be expedient to lay bare to their pastor matters that did not pertain either to faith or morals! By slow degrees this hesitancy was overcome. The committee behaved with great discretion and no man's private affairs were made public to the community. The money was cheap, and it came to be known as "the lucky money", simply because the object had to be always one which promised either a profit or a saving. When a person sought a loan and declared its object, he found, not a committee of inquisitive busybodies, but of kindly friends, fully aware of their own responsibilities, with knowledge and experience often superior to that of the borrower,

ready to advise him as to the object of his loan and very often helping him to select a more profitable purpose than that he had had in view. Many a young farmer made his start in life on loan capital thus secured. As time went on, borrowers, who had been granted loans, had applied them to the specific purpose stated and had repaid them punctually, began to feel a genuine pride in their established reputations for honesty and punctuality and have been known to boast that their credit was so good with their society that they could obtain from it all the money they needed. In short, these modest little institutions had not only succeeded in making money for their members but were also doing something even more beneficial—making *character*. It was little wonder that the clergy of all denominations came to regard the credit society as one of the most valuable institutions for the promotion of honesty, thrift and profit. For many years this had been the experience of the clergy in Germany, Italy, France, Belgium and Holland, where the co-operative credit scheme had earned for itself the proud title of “the capitalisation of honesty”.

It will naturally be asked how these little societies were financed; how it was possible for them to lend money at 5 per cent without loss. In the first instance, nobody, not even the Secretary, usually the local school teacher, received any payment for his services. Nevertheless, the services were given ungrudgingly and cheerfully. But, even with voluntary unpaid service, money cannot be

lent until it is first secured. Until the passing of the Societies' Borrowing Powers Act, which the late Lord Plunket steered through the House of Lords, credit societies could not accept deposits or loans except from their own members. As the members had no money to deposit or lend, but, on the other hand, usually wanted to borrow, little or no capital could be looked for in that quarter. When the scheme came before the joint stock banks, their directors looked somewhat askance at it. How could they be expected to lend money to an association of persons who were little better than paupers? After a while they were induced to lend, and at a flat rate of 4 per cent, but only in such cases where the joint and several guarantee (referred to at length elsewhere) was forthcoming. However, such guarantees were generally obtained, the only security of the guarantors being the unlimited liability of the members, and, so far as is known, in no case did the societies default to the banks and in few, or none, were the committee-men who signed the banks' guarantee let in. After the passing of Lord Plunket's Act, a great many persons who were interested in this form of co-operation came forward with deposits and even former borrowers, who had overcome their difficulties and had accumulated some money, were ready to deposit small sums with their society. The interest on these deposits varied from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , or up to 4 per cent, dependent both on the existing bank rate (and always a little in excess of it) and on the length of time for which the deposit was made.

By this means the credit societies had a margin of from 1 to 2 per cent between the interest they paid on loans and deposits and the interest charged to borrowers.

As was only natural, the credit societies were most numerous in the poorer areas, notably in the congested districts, where they did a vast amount of good. The dead level of poverty which prevailed in the congested districts provided at once a homogeneous and an ideal community for the Raiffeisen Bank, for there were no rich, nor even well-to-do. All were miserably poor, but, in the main, magnificently honest. Through the influence of Horace Plunkett, the then Bishop of Raphoe (Dr. O'Donnell) and other members of the Congested Districts Board, loans were made by that body at a low rate of interest to credit societies approved and recommended by the I.A.O.S. Similar loans were made by the Department of Agriculture to societies outside the congested area.

When Mr. T. W. Russell succeeded Horace Plunkett as Vice-President of the Department and became a member of the Congested Districts Board, his prejudice against all forms of co-operation manifested itself. He declared publicly that the system under which the credit societies were formed was "rotten and indefensible" and gave it as his opinion that the £24,000 lent by the Board was "not worth more than half a crown in the £". So, the loans advanced by the Department of Agriculture and by the Congested Board, on

which interest had been paid punctually all through, were called in. It was a thousand pities that Horace Plunkett did not take "T. W." at his word and buy up the entire outstanding loan capital of the Congested Districts Board for £3000! Still, this would have prevented the honest western peasants from giving, as they gave, their fine refutation of T. W. Russell's calumny. The total sum lost by the two lending bodies amounted in fact to somewhere about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of one per cent on one year's interest, the aggregate of the principal being fully recouped in the final repayments. The repayment of the capital lent by the Congested Districts Board did not, however, as it must be supposed T. W. Russell anticipated, bring the credit societies tumbling down. Deposits were forthcoming, even in extremely poor localities, and advances were obtained from the joint stock banks. But, although the morale of the more active societies remained unshaken, those which had relied exclusively on State credits were severely depleted of funds and not all of these continued to work after the loans were repaid.

The first of these societies was established in 1898 at Doneraile, County Cork, its chairman being Coroner James Byrne, and, soon afterwards, another at Kyle, near Roscrea, with the Rev. John Cunningham, P.P., as its chairman. By 1900 the number had increased to 76, with a membership of 3138, a capital of £6247 and a turnover of £7270. So popular had this type of society become that in 1910 there were no less than 234

of them, with 18,422 members and a turnover of £57,641.

The remarkably rapid increase in the number of the credit societies can be mainly attributed to the able advocacy of George W. Russell (A.E.), who had been introduced to Horace Plunkett by W. B. Yeats. A.E., as he was generally known, combined in his unusual personality mysticism, poetry, a belief in beings "not of this world" who haunt the Irish hillsides (which most of us, being unbelieving dogs, entirely failed to comprehend), and literary gifts of a very high order. Through this strange blend of the mystical and ideal there ran a very definite vein of the eminently practical business man, acquired, one must suppose, from his experience in the counting-house of an old and prosperous city firm. A.E. left his ledgers to take up the organisation of Raiffeisen societies, whose main foundation of altruism appealed at once to his idealism while their more substantial benefits satisfied the practical side of his nature. His success as an organiser was very great. He became *persona grata* with gentle and simple, cleric and layman. Kindly, gentle, persuasive, convincing, thoroughly imbued with the spirit of co-operation and intensely earnest in its advocacy, his sympathy with the poverty-stricken people amidst whom his work lay was deep and abiding. No better appointment could have possibly been made, for no member of the I.A.O.S. staff could equal him as an exponent of the co-operative ideal, while, with all his gentleness, he could become at times the





GEORGE W. RUSSELL (A.E.)

From a portrait by Dermod O'Brien, P.R.H.A.



fiercest and most formidable controversialist when the movement was assailed. Very soon those who were "willing to wound but half afraid to strike" found they had no chance against the keen thrusts of our practical poet; so they left him alone.

During the early years of the Great War, while there was no increase either in numbers or in business of the credit societies, no diminution took place, but, with the War prices for their cattle and their produce at peak point, the people found they no longer needed to borrow as before. The I.A.O.S., too, was preoccupied with War work, mainly the formation of societies to supply local needs of various kinds. At no time did these excellent little societies receive the measure of attention and supervision from the I.A.O.S. which they merited. Their means did not admit of subscribing adequately to the I.A.O.S. funds, which were always insufficient to defray the cost of supervising societies unable to pay for services so rendered, whilst the trading societies, which could reimburse at least in part the services rendered by the I.A.O.S., appeared to be of greater importance in the circumstances to the community.

The joint stock banks lent money freely to farmers, individually, and this, of course, tended to diminish the volume of business done by the credit societies. By 1920, their numbers had been reduced to 124, with a turnover of £30,362. Ten years later only fifty-two of the older type of credit society remained, with a business shrunk to £13,269. Previous to that, the Department of

Agriculture, under the Free State Government, had appropriated £100,000 to be lent to farmers who had lost live stock through the ravages of the fluke. It being thought inadvisable to make advances directly to farmers who had thus suffered, the Department arranged with the I.A.O.S. to form credit societies through which loans could be made in such cases. Accordingly, over sixty of these societies were established, it being made quite clear that, as they differed so fundamentally from the true Raiffeisen type, the I.A.O.S. could accept no responsibility for their success. The loans to these "fluke" societies were made, in the first instance, for three years, which was subsequently extended to five. At the expiration of that period, the loan was intended to be repaid and, unless the society could obtain capital from some other quarter, it automatically ceased to exist. Though by no means an ideal scheme, it served a very useful purpose in a serious emergency and it is gratifying to say that virtually every pound of the money advanced was repaid, together with interest. As has already been stated, all the money previously advanced by the Department of Agriculture was also, *malgré* Mr. T. W. Russell, repaid. These facts go to show that a very poor community, trusted with total advances from public funds exceeding a quarter of a million, did not betray that trust reposed in them, but met their obligations with an honesty and promptitude which provides a fine example to people better endowed.

The Agricultural Credit Corporation, a body set

up by the Free State Government, but working independently of it, agreed, with the I.A.O.S., upon a scheme whereby loans were made by the Corporation to approved creameries to be re-lent to their members for the purchase of milch cows. The loan to the individual was limited to £150 and had to be repaid in ten annual instalments which were provided for by deductions from the milk payments. Only a few creameries availed themselves of this scheme, mainly owing to the fact that the interest charged by the Corporation had to be 6 per cent. It is understood that the loans are being steadily repaid.

Many believe that the Raiffeisen system can only be applied equitably and safely to communities which are homogeneous in so far as their means or their poverty is concerned. They argue that the unlimited liability of a man who has nothing means nothing to him. But they seem to forget that, among the very poorest, among those who have neither money nor means, there still may be the greatest asset of all—the poor man's good name. From a purely economic standpoint, Raiffeisenism may seem insecure, though it has not proved itself, nor has it been proved, to be so. To meet this objection, rules were devised for creameries and agricultural societies, both having limited liability, empowering them to make loans to their members for approved purposes just as the credit societies did. So far, these rules appear to have been a dead letter, for there is no record of any such loans having been made. One credit society, in County

Wexford, worked for some years on a modified Raiffeisenism, under limited liability, but not very efficiently. Many creameries, however, are in the habit of advancing money to needy milk suppliers, to be repaid by deduction from the value of their milk. In the great majority of cases, no interest is charged on such loans although the society making them, usually by drawing on its bankers, has to pay the bank rate of interest on their overdrawings, thus making the advances to the needy members a charge on the earnings of the society. This is, of course, very unfair to those who do not need to borrow, although it is a manifestation of the spirit of goodwill which is engendered by co-operative association. It seems only equitable that persons having to borrow should not only repay the amount lent but also pay interest on their borrowings, seeing that, in the event of any default, the loss must fall on the whole community. Except where the accommodation is required for the purchase of milch cows, cases of the kind could be fairly met by the establishment of a co-operative store in connection with the creamery, from which agricultural and domestic requirements could be supplied on reasonable terms of credit, thus putting all such transactions on a business footing. This suggestion has been elaborated elsewhere in this book and it is unnecessary to say more here than that the creameries equipped with distributive stores, are, generally speaking, much stronger, financially, than those which have adhered strictly to "non-controversial" business. It is to be hoped that

this development may become general, for through it more than through any other means will the creamery be enabled to attract and hold the loyalty of its members by demonstrating to them that it can supply all their daily needs, and not only those of the farmer-members, but also those of the farm labourers for which, so far, very little has been done in the Co-operative Movement. And there is another excellent reason, if indeed any further be needed. The wage-earner is, as a rule, more punctual in his payments than the farmer. He receives his pay weekly, so that he can either pay cash or, at all events, keep his account square, whereas the nature of the farmer's business compels him to take credit in the majority of cases. Anything and everything that it is possible to do should be done to draw the farmer and the labourer more closely together, and here is a simple way in which that may be accomplished and greatly to their mutual benefit.

There is also the case of the non-dairying district, where, in the absence of a creamery, no credits of the kind just considered are available. This could often be provided by an agricultural society and a credit society working separately but side by side, in which a member belonging to both could benefit from each, borrowing the cost of his seeds and fertilisers from the credit society and purchasing them for cash from the agricultural society.

## CHAPTER XXIII

The Personnel of the I.A.O.S. Committee described

IN trying to sketch a history of the movement which Horace Plunkett originated and guided, and in bringing it down to the present day, I have been forced to say too little of the man by whom much of the work was done: but above all of him without whom none of it would have been done. So in one more chapter I must try to make good some omissions, and I begin with Colonel Sir Nugent Everard, one of the three men who before me were presidents of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. Lord Mont-eagle, as has been said, was the first, and when he was forced to resign, Horace Plunkett, then being Vice-President of the Department of Agriculture, could not take the place. Nugent Everard was elected and held office till Plunkett, no longer a minister, could assume the headship.

At that time relations between the Department and ourselves were strained almost to breaking point. Everard, as he expressed it, had "to keep the ring", for, sooth to say, the fighting was not all on one side. His good temper, tact and sound common sense saved many an ugly situation. It was a deplorable chapter of misunderstanding and blun-



dering on both sides, one which I should gladly pass over as quickly as possible were it not that I feel it my duty to tell the tale as truthfully as I can. But, out of it all, Nugent Everard's high reputation as a man of honour and a man of peace emerges enhanced. He was a very busy man and interested in many things, in cattle-breeding, in the Royal Dublin Society, in the many public bodies of which he was a member, and, latterly, in tobacco culture, in which, I fear, he lost a fortune; but he always found time to attend closely to his unpaid and often unpleasant task of keeping the I.A.O.S. alive until Horace Plunkett was free to return to it. His memory will not be forgotten.

It is a pleasure to give a brief sketch of an Ulster member of our Committee, the Rev. Edward F. Campbell—a big-framed, big-hearted man. He was Chairman of the Killyman Co-operative Creamery, in his own parish of Moy. He was also a great Orangeman and Chaplain to the Loyal Orange Order.

On the I.A.O.S. Committee, he left all such things behind him and fraternised more than any with his two Roman Catholic priest colleagues, near whom he invariably seated himself. No member of the Committee was more popular, and deservedly so. He was genial, kindly, shrewd and deeply imbued with the spirit of co-operation. He had an intense admiration for Plunkett and a deep affection for him. To him Father Finlay, the Jesuit, was just a great Churchman, even though in an opposite clerical camp, but, above all and

beyond all, these two fine characters had in common a bond of paramount strength. While he was cordial in his personal relations with Montgomery, he was as much opposed to his Prussianism as any southern Nationalist and seldom supported any proposals which in his opinion ran counter to co-operative sentiment. I believe he did more than any other man to bring north and south into a better understanding of each other, and it has always been a matter of deep regret to me that the bond which he began to forge had to be left unfinished when the time came for partition. Edward Campbell died last year, but to those of us who knew and valued him, his memory will remain as that of a stalwart Ulsterman, who abated no jot or tittle of his beliefs, but who did not find it incompatible with them to work in friendly harmony with those from whom he differed.

Our movement in its early days owed much to Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth. The co-operative creameries attracted him and he threw his whole heart into their promotion and with great success. A shy man, who hated publicity and public speaking; whenever he did speak, he was listened to with attention and respect because he was always practical and sound. Speedily his native County of Sligo had flourishing co-operative creameries in every possible centre, most of which remain to this day. He became a member of the I.A.O.S. Committee, which he regularly attended, though he seldom spoke. He was a convinced and sincere co-operator, and he spared neither his excellent

brains, his purse, nor his efforts to make every society with which he was connected a worthy unit. He was a very busy man and engaged in many activities. He started a co-operative shirt factory in Sligo, which provided employment for a large number of girls. At Lissadell he had a huge bulb farm and Alpine garden, a wood-working industry, weaving, spinning and other home industries. Also, he was Chairman of the Sligo, Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway. His beautiful demesne was open to the public, and he devoted himself with almost passionate energy to provide employment under decent conditions for all who were prepared to work. An ancestor of his had "cleared" a great part of the countryside in order to create the great demesne of Lissadell, which stretches from the sea right up to the slopes of Ben Bulbin, the first of that wonderful range of mountains which tower above the road from Sligo to Bundoran, one of the most beautiful drives in Ireland. Lissadell's hospitality to all of us who worked in the I.A.O.S. was unbounded. We could come, self-invited, and stay as long as we liked, and Gore-Booth himself would come with us and lend a hand at our work.

Though those days have passed for ever, I, and others who made Lissadell their headquarters, will never forget the kindness of all the Gore-Booth family, nor the fine, though unobtrusive, part that its head took in promoting the movement.

Loftus Antony Bryan was an early member of

the I.A.O.S. Committee. He was perhaps the most thorough-going co-operator of any in our ranks. Endowed with immense energy and forcefulness and equipped with a brain teeming with ideas, he speedily became head of that wing of the promoters who desired to see "whole hog" co-operation preached by the I.A.O.S. Bryan and his followers chafed under the restraint imposed upon us by the limitation of our propaganda to purely agricultural co-operation. He became Chairman of the Irish Agricultural Wholesale Society, which soon developed an extensive business in "contraband" goods. His own society, at Enniscorthy, had before then broken away and had taken a lead in dealing in all kinds of domestic as well as agricultural requirements. Personally, I believe Bryan was quite right; but, as he was an impetuous and impulsive person, he forced the pace to such an extent that he came to be regarded as the "stormy petrel" of the movement and, now and then, rather a thorn in the side of his more sedate and sober-minded colleagues. The I.A.O.S. was, more or less, acting under duress. The grant from public funds, on which the Society had largely come to depend, might be cut off. The traders were apprehensive, watchful and very well organised. They dreaded the appearance of the co-operative store, while they ridiculed the idea of amateur shopkeeping.

Loftus Bryan was born before his time and was always a "young man in a hurry". Nevertheless, he must be credited with having infused a new and

militant spirit into that section of the movement over which he held sway and to have accomplished a great deal of work that was good. He and I at times fought like cat and dog; but all the while I had a sneaking admiration for his pluck and audacity. In Wexford he was extremely popular with the farmers; elsewhere he was regarded as a domineering revolutionary. In manner he was never persuasive and always created the impression that he held in contempt all "half-baked" attempts at co-operation. One of his chief ideas was that the movement should have its own fertiliser factory. He took infinite pains to master the subject, and only abandoned it when he found that the Fertiliser Combine controlled the supply of phosphate rock all over the world.

Bryan devoured every foreign publication on agricultural co-operation, and would flourish *L'Engrais* or some similar paper before one if it contained anything new—particularly if it were revolutionary. He was a tireless worker and never spared himself or, indeed, anybody else if he had an idea which he wanted to follow up. His activity in the movement ceased to a great extent after he joined up for the Great War, from which he retired with the rank of Lieut.-Colonel, and of late years ill-health has prevented him from following his old pursuits with his former energy. Nevertheless the movement owes a great deal to him for his hard work and his progressive ideas. It was not his fault that all he aimed at did not come to fruition, though it is conceivable that it may, even in our time. He was a

fearless and pugnacious leader and he always took his reverses like the sportsman he was.

Henry Chichester Tisdall, a member of an old Meath family, was for several years on the I.A.O.S. Committee. He was a quiet, reserved man, with a vein of rather cynical humour, which occasionally showed itself. He never spoke in public—as far as I remember—except perhaps to propose or second some resolution. His ways were methodical, precise and orderly. He had a trained business mind and an excellently clear brain. I do not know what attracted him to the Co-operative Movement, but that he took a deep interest in it there can be no doubt. He was always in the inner Councils of the I.A.O.S. and proved to be one of its most useful members. He was eternally trying to heal the differences between the I.A.O.S. and the Department, but the poison had bitten too deep to be eradicated. Some of us gained the impression that he was more prone to take the side of the Department than that of the I.A.O.S. Whatever I might have thought then, I do not think so now. His quiet, judicial mind had realised the faults on both sides. He loathed fighting and strove to put an end to it. To me, he was always friendly, but never demonstrative except on one occasion. He came with my three boys and me to eat a frugal lunch at a coffee shop. The boys were returning to school next day. Tisdall produced three sovereigns from his pocket and gave one to each, to their infinite delight. Then he gave his queer little snort. “That’s the best money I ever spent”, said he. As we crossed

the street he asked me to keep on one side of him. I asked why, and he said he was blind of an eye—a defect I had never noticed. I asked him how it had happened and he said, “It has something to do with my heart, or my brain. I really don’t know which, but it will kill me pretty quick some day.” True enough; Tisdall died suddenly when in London on I.A.O.S. business with one of our organisers. His was one of those cases where a man knowing that death may always be imminent, yet goes on doing his duty faithfully, quietly and bravely until he is stricken down.

Edward Adderley Stopford succeeded Tisdall on the Committee and there found the work which he sought to fill what he described as “the evening of his days”. He was an old man when he came to us in 1908, how old I cannot say, but not too old to leave behind him an enduring record of his methodical industry. At first he seemed rather suspicious of us. In spite of his birth and upbringing, he had become, like his sister, Mrs. John R. Green, a strong Home Ruler, and I dare say he had been told that there was no “gra” for Home Rule in the Plunkett House. It was not long before all his doubts were dispelled and he gradually thawed out to show himself in his true nature, one of the most charming and delightful of men. He patiently primed himself in the work and methods of the I.A.O.S., poring for hours over old pamphlets, circulars and documents of all kinds, studying the correspondence and reports of the organisers, examining accounts—he had a great liking for

figures—and planning how the independent income of the Society could be increased. He found our statistical records in a deplorable state of neglect, so he devised a system of statistical cards for which he procured filing cabinets and proceeded to record the business of every society from its beginning. Huge as this work was, the old man stuck to it, and had actually brought his records up to date before his health failed and he had to resign. He was especially interested in live stock insurance as carried on co-operatively in other countries, and had mastered all its details. Then he set to work to draft a scheme for Ireland, and a very fine scheme it was. Unfortunately it could not be put into operation here, because, unlike other countries, Ireland had no body prepared to undertake the re-insurance.

Stopford was not content with his work for the movement in the I.A.O.S. He became a director of the I.A.W.S. and brought to it a well-trained business experience, for he himself had been a successful business man.

His one hobby was wood-carving, and very beautiful work he did on picture frames and such like. The former he gilt himself. He carved a magnificent fire-place for his dining-room which bore the inscription, "I warm both hands at the fire of Life". Though not a rich man, his subscriptions to the I.A.O.S. were always large, but his work for the Society, and the fine spirit in which it was done, was his greater gift. Day after day, week after week, and month after month, he came



regularly as any clerk to the Plunkett House, never so happy as when he had unlimited work to do. While he never abandoned his Home Rule proclivities, it would seem that in co-operation he had found something that came nearer to his gentle heart than political strife. All of us loved the kindly old man, and it was a real gap in our lives when he ceased to occupy his special chair in my room. When he could come no more, he left us his chair, and it is now the seat of the President of the Society.

Harold Barbour, the youngest of our leaders and the most enthusiastic and energetic, came under the spell of the I.A.O.S. almost immediately after he came down from Oxford. He was a member of a wealthy, influential and highly respected family who were engaged, on a large scale, in the flax-spinning industry, and, young as he was, had a seat on the Board of the Linen Thread Company. He looked younger than his years, boyish almost, when I first met him, and even to-day, when he must be close on sixty, he has retained his youthful appearance. So youthful did he seem that once, when I was touring Ulster with him, an old farmer asked me, "Who's the wee Tory ye have with ye?" But he very soon proved that he had a pretty old and shrewd head on his young shoulders. Wherever there was a demand for a society, he was ready to go and explain co-operation. All parts of Ireland, for the great purpose he had in view, were alike to him, and so he became almost as well known in the southern provinces as he was in

Ulster. And to know this enthusiastic young Ulsterman was to admire and like him. I do not suppose there was anyone in the whole movement who enjoyed, and more deservedly, a wider popularity. He emulated and eclipsed the feats of even the hardiest of us organisers—and, in those days, I was pretty well toughened by long and uncomfortable journeys by road and rail, by long exposure to all kinds of weather, by long fasts, appeased mostly by unwholesome food, taken at any time of day or night; so I could manage to stand most hardships. Without any such preliminary training, Harold Barbour would leave his comfortable home and drive for hundreds of miles, from place to place, in a small, open, red motor, which he dubbed “the Fire Engine”. And Jehu, the son of Nimshi, “had nothing on him” for speed on the road! I think Barbour preferred work in County Donegal to work anywhere else. There was such sore need for co-operation and the people were such a splendid race, combining the shrewdness of the Scot with the kindliness and innate good manners of the South. So we often found ourselves together there. His coming into the movement, with his whirlwind energy, gave it fresh impetus, not only in Ulster but even further afield. He was regular in his attendance at our Committee meetings and became as popular there as he was in the country. In due time he became Chairman of the I.A.W.S., which continued to increase its trade under his hands until it was overtaken by the post-War slump in 1921. Shortly afterwards, in consequence

of the partition of the country and because of its dependence upon Government grants, the I.A.O.S. was forced to withdraw from Northern Ireland. As it was one of the few links that bound north and south together, this enforced divorce was to be deplored. However, the co-operators in the six-county area set up an Organisation Society of their own and Harold Barbour has been its first and only President, as was most befitting. Within its restricted area and with a very limited income, the U.A.O.S. has done and is doing splendid work, much of the success of which is due to the inspiration of its President, well backed by its very able Secretary, Mr. J. Johnston.

Shortly after I met him, Harold Barbour married and was fortunate to find a wife who entered whole-heartedly into his co-operative work and who has done a man's part, with a woman's judgment, sympathy and intuition, in helping her husband to promote it.

It is never easy to write about a living person, particularly if he is a personal friend and one with whom he is in constant association. In this particular case, the subject, Dermot OBrien, happens to dislike publicity of any kind, so I find it hard to know what to say about him without causing offence. His father, Edward William OBrien, was one of the first of the resident gentry to ally himself to Horace Plunkett, and was mainly instrumental in establishing the flourishing Ardagh Co-operative Creamery, quite near his home at Cahirmoyle, County Limerick. He was twice

married and Dermot was the only son of the first marriage, which was to a sister of the late Lord Monteagle. Hence Dermot O'Brien had no escape from the toils of co-operation. With his father on one side and his uncle on the other, urging him on, he went into it, up to his neck, and brought with him almost every member of his family and family connections. He became a member of the I.A.O.S. Committee and then a director of the I.A.W.S., of which he has been for many years Chairman. He is also Trustee and Treasurer of the Horace Plunkett Foundation and, from the first, gave his close attention to co-operative work for which the movement owes a deep debt, as it does also for the very material aid which it received from him and his relatives.

By preference and training he is an artist, a noted painter of portraits and of beautiful landscapes, and it was only natural that he should be chosen to be President of the Royal Hibernian Academy.

William Eden Holmes, known as "Willie" Holmes, was a tall, genial and handsome man. He was a member of an old Roscommon family, whose representatives had, for generations, been agents to the resident landlords of that county as well as others owning properties in those surrounding. His popularity was great, though he had not earned it by undue leniency. Somehow, Willie Holmes had a way, entirely his own, of pacifying the most irascible of tenants and of bringing such recalcitrants to heel. I have heard him addressed by

an indignant dame whose husband had been served with an ejectment: "Aah, Master Willie, 'tis a crool thing you do be doin' on poor Mehal and me long wake family of childer". "Oh, bosh, Mrs. Murphy," he would reply. "Sure Lord C. must get his rent; the poor man, you know, isn't too well off and spends every penny of it at home. And, tell me, how is Mikey getting on at school—mind you, he is more like his mother than his father, a fine healthy boy. What'll you make of him, Mrs. Murphy? May be a Priest or a Doctor?" The good woman's rage would have been subdued by this soft talk and she'd murmur that she had no such great ambitions for her offspring but pleaded only that they might feel secure in their possession of the "little farm of land". Then the wise William would say, "Well, Mrs. Murphy, you know Mehal owes three gales of rent, and Lord C. is a hard man to serve, good and all as he is, but if Mehal will pay me *one* gale after Ballinasloe, I'll do my best with his Lordship to cancel the arrears". So Mehal would duly pay his "gale" and Holmes would probably get the arrears forgiven, or compounded by a small payment. He never evicted. He said it didn't pay. Any sort of settlement was preferable to eviction. Apart from expediency, this big, good-looking land agent possessed a great vein of sympathy with the tenantry and a far wiser head than most of his fellows. He took what he could get in the way of rents, and when the time came to sell the estates he managed, he sold them well.

It was he who conceived the brilliant idea of hooking the biggest fish that was ever drawn into the rapacious net of the I.A.O.S. A rich merchant of Dublin, already knighted, but not content with that dignity, sought the greater honour of a baronetcy. The astute Holmes laid before this gentleman all the obstacles which lay in the path of his ambition. Other agencies co-operated and the time-honoured custom of a donation to the Party funds was departed from. The aspirant paid out £25,000 to the movement, unconditionally, provided he could add "Bart." to his name. He got his reward and his shekels relieved our urgent necessities.

When Holmes had completed the sale of the last of the estates of which he had charge, he left Ireland and the I.A.O.S. He had also given very valuable service as a director of the I.A.W.S. He had had a good business training, had learned to understand men of all kinds, and as far as the Co-operative Movement was concerned he rendered it memorable service. His younger son, a Captain in the Scots Guards, was killed in the Great War and he did not long survive him.

It would be quite impossible, without extending this chapter to the dimensions of a book, to do full justice to the great number of patriotic men who, from time to time, served on the I.A.O.S. Committee from its very early days and did their part in the country, but I feel it only right to mention the names of some of the most prominent:

The Right Honourable Christopher Talbot

Redington, D.L., Resident Commissioner for National Education and Chairman of the Oranmore Credit Society.

The Lord Plunket, G.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., afterwards Governor-General of New Zealand, but some time "Cycle Expert" on the staff of the *Irish Homestead*.

The Very Rev. Dean Barry, D.D., P.P., President of the North Kilkenny Poultry Society, of the Ballyragget Creamery and Chairman of the Ballyragget Credit Society.

James Stewart Moore, D.L., Chairman of the Dervock and District Poultry Society.

Edward Mervyn Archdale, M.P., D.L. (now Sir Edward M. Archdale, Bart., and until lately Minister for Agriculture in Northern Ireland); President of the Ballinamallard Creamery.

The Venerable Archdeacon Phelan, P.P., President of the Glenmore Creamery and now President of the Piltown Society, a sturdy and consistent co-operator.

Major John Alexander, D.L., President (while it lasted) of the Milford Creamery.

Sir Henry Grattan Bellew, Bart., President of the Mount Bellew Society and Director of the I.A.W.S.

R. H. Prior-Wandesforde, D.L., President of the Castlecomer Creamery.

A. J. Crichton, President of the Skreen and Dromard Society.

Hugh P. Ryan, Manager of the Drumbane Creamery and Director of the I.A.W.S., also

Chairman of the Irish Co-operative Agency Society.

T. Y. Chambers, Vice-President of the Bailieborough Creamery.

Senator Thomas W. Westropp Bennett, some time President of the Kilmallock Creamery and Director of the I.A.W.S., now Chairman of Seanad Éireann.

Peter P. Moloney, some time President of the Solohead Creamery and afterwards Chairman of the Agency Society.

J. G. R. Porter, President of the Omagh Creamery.

The Committee also included in its membership such prominent politicians as Mr. John E. Redmond, M.P., Mr. Thomas Sexton, M.P., Major W. H. K. Redmond, M.P., Sir Thomas H. Grattan Esmonde, Bart., M.P., but the two first mentioned never attended a meeting and the attendances of the others were rare.

I approach now the greatest name of all. I have not "the pen of a ready writer". The pen would indeed be a gifted one that did justice to the man about whom this story centres. In some parts of it I may be open to criticism for having given undue prominence to certain episodes which do not flatter Horace Plunkett. But I am convinced that, were he to be with us once again, he would offer no objection to them; he asked for candour as others seek eulogy. His hatred of sycophancy and distrust of flattery was only equalled by his resentment at unjust criticism, to which he was subjected ignor-



antly, cruelly and incessantly. If, indeed, he had any pride—and what public man has ever been devoid of it altogether?—that pride was centred not in himself but always in the things he had planned, and for which invariably he accorded the praise to those who had carried out the schemes of his master mind.

The second son of a noble Irish family, which had inhabited an ancient castle in County Meath for six hundred years, born of an English mother, also of noble family, educated at Eton and Oxford, handicapped by a frail body and an enfeebled constitution but endowed with an indomitable spirit, an iron will and that rare quality—the courage to be moderate—Plunkett's patrician ancestry and upbringing proved no barrier to his association and friendship with persons of other and even low estate, but even seemed to facilitate it. He was always simple, gentle and unassuming. He used to be described to me as "a nice, plain gentleman", by the country people to whom he was introduced. If they did not fully understand him they were not singular in that respect. Once Campbell-Bannerman was challenged to "explain" him in the House. He had been asked to what party Plunkett belonged. The shrewd old Scot hesitated a little before giving his answer and then said, "He belongs to the Horace Plunkett category". And it was true: he was *sui generis*. For this social reformer reigned in a little state of his own, advocated things which were anathema to his class, made friends of former foes of that class, and was surrounded by a small

but devoted band of workers who loved him, even from afar, and who carried out his behests as faithfully as the Knights of the Grail.

How did he win this affection, this fine fidelity? Not by flattery, nor by the temptation of reward. I can only answer for myself. He shamed me into it. He set the example of hard work, of an invincible belief in his policy. He denied himself all the pleasures and enjoyments of his class and worked like a slave at his great task. If I and my colleagues could not aspire to equal him in his zealous labours we could, at all events, follow in his footsteps.

Rarely did he ever give praise, and still more rarely blame, for what we attempted to do, thus concentrating our thoughts and energies not on success or failure but on the deed itself and the skill needed for its performance. He was always fair and often magnificently generous yet never effusive. Though he deeply attracted yet there were times when he temporarily almost repelled one. Perfectly charming and delightfully simple, in his many moods of genial confidence, yet for some little *bêtise*, some apparently harmless solecism, he would become suddenly and severely aloof. He was always very much alone with himself except when he entertained his numerous guests at his hospitable home at Kilteragh. There his hospitality was unbounded and he entertained lavishly any who were in the least interested in his work, as well as many others whose chief attraction was the cuisine and the excellent cellar. This

cheerful house, destroyed by a band of hooligans in 1922, was built by Horace Plunkett as the result of a bequest from his father for that purpose. By the time the mansion and its surroundings were completed the original bequest must have been far exceeded. Plunkett devoted it mainly to the entertainment of his fellow-workers and associates, though the house-parties often embraced scoffers and unbelievers. For some years I was its "Seneschal", so I speak from knowledge. Horace Plunkett's moral courage was of a very high order. The lack of this quality in his fellow-countrymen became almost an obsession with him and I think he put a stress upon it in his book *Ireland in the New Century*, which in our human world it could scarcely be expected to bear. His great physical courage was called out when he suffered for many months from a broken hip-joint, which ever afterwards prevented his riding, and also from the effects of three major operations. He had to endure agonies from an affection of the ear. All of these afflictions he bore with a courage and patience almost past belief. All the time his heart was in and his thoughts for the movement he had created.

In his last illness, when he was unable to withstand an operation and his sufferings were intense, he wrote to me almost every day, always about his work and very little about himself. And so, this great man, burnt out of his home and thus isolated from the country he had loved and served so well, ended his fine life in England. I saw him laid to rest in the quiet churchyard at Weybridge. If ever

a man deserved a grave in Westminster Abbey or, better still, in St. Patrick's Cathedral, it was he. My last view of my dear leader and friend was at his railway station. I had been staying with him at Weybridge towards the end of 1931. He insisted on driving me, Jehu fashion, in a fast car to the station. As the train left I saw his frail little figure, hatless, waving his last farewell to me and seeming to urge me onward, to persevere. I feel that I must try—until the last bolts are shot!

## CHAPTER XXIV

### Conclusion—An Appeal and a Warning

EVERY tale must come to a close and I feel it is high time to end mine.

One thing in particular I desire to emphasise. The Co-operative Movement was never conceived nor put forward, as has been alleged, as an alternative or antidote to any political party or policy. Its fundamental object was to teach the Irish farmer business methods and habits and to conserve to him the profits of his industry, while at the same time giving him a higher and nobler outlook on life, on citizenship, on fellowship with his neighbours. It never sought to take from any class wealth or influence which properly belonged to that class. It never sought to enrich the countryman at the expense of the townsman. Its founders realised that there was, and probably will be, only one main source of wealth and prosperity for Ireland—its lands. They sought to teach Irish farmers the way by which their foreign competitors had made the most of their opportunities, which were, in many cases, far inferior to ours and who had overtaken and even outstripped us. They promised no El Dorado, no Bonanza. They held out only the prospect of hard, methodical and

honest work, to be rewarded by increased and improved production and, by means of co-operation, reduced expenses and, therefore, greater profits from the industry, profits which would be shared by the people, alike in country and town, creating prosperity, encouraging industry, thrift and all those things which go to make a people a nation. Above all, the founders aimed—and this perhaps is what drew to it so many clergymen of all denominations—at the inculcation of charity, the greatest of all virtues, without which neither State nor people can survive and prosper.

It was a high aim and purpose, a cause worth while giving one's life for, as its founder and others have done. If it has not in their day fulfilled all their expectations it may yet do so for the present generation. There must be *simple justice* for the farming class. The chief wealth producers of the country must have their place in the sun. That place they have never enjoyed, nor will they ever be permitted to enjoy it until their organisation becomes so powerful in the land that every other subordinate though well-organised industry must, perforce, listen to the voice of its spokesmen with respect because they produce the bulk of the country's wealth. While this is so, they have but little say in its government. Every other industry, every interest, in the country is organised for self-protection, often for aggression. Organisation, to be really effective and powerful, must be backed by "big business". The only "big business" in Ireland is the farming industry, and yet it

wields no real power. If it were organised as thoroughly as the British co-operators have organised their six and a half millions of members; if it possessed a trade federation comparable with the Co-operative Wholesale Society with its trade turnover exceeding eighty-two millions sterling annually, it would be listened to. We have a long and hard road to travel before we approach such a position in Ireland, even relatively. But the ultimate goal is a prize worth striving for—the recognition of the organised workers on the land as the dominant body in the State.

Horace Plunkett once infuriated many of his Ulster friends by the suggestion that they might “disinfect their politics with common sense”. Nor was his advice to the other three provinces, that “the less politics there is in business and the more business in politics, the better for both”, more sympathetically received. The ancient Chinese philosopher must have found in his country a condition of things analogous to that in Ireland, when he exclaimed sadly, “There is too much policy!” Policy, or politics, call it which you will, seems to have come to be almost as the breath of our lives. All parties profess a deep and abiding love of their country while cherishing an equally profound hatred of those who differ from them, too often expressed in the language of the gutter or manifested in violence. Can a State, worthy of the name, be engrafted on such a sterile, cankered stock?

In the world of to-day there is no room for such

a fantastic condition as "splendid isolation". But there is another kind of isolation—that provided for lepers. Are we to keep on drifting towards such a dread fate while the one essential and by far the most numerous class utters no word of protest, still less makes the smallest effort to avert such a disaster? Our poor country has been sundered by a frontier which is at once the negation of statesmanship and common sense. Its imposition is hated by all sensible Irishmen, even when they recognise, under existing circumstances, its inevitability. It has necessitated the setting up of two Governments, bitterly hostile to each other and, apparently, becoming more so daily. Neither has shown the least indication of a desire to mitigate the hardships and inconveniences imposed by the boundary. Both Governments spend money like water; they maintain separate Parliaments, hordes of civil servants, further augmented by the huge bands of Customs officials, who harass alike the would-be smuggler and the honest man, with the utmost impartiality. The tax-payer groans and—pays. The prospect of a "United Ireland"—that country of our dreams—has almost receded beyond our vision. Before it has disappeared irrevocably, before we are confronted with the prospect of a future so hideously bleak and hopeless as to paralyse all hope, all effort, even to destroy the remnants of our sanity, can nothing be done to arouse our farmers north, south, east and west, to combine, to sink their petty differences, to subordinate everything of minor importance to the



saving of their common country from ruin? We Irish always look for a leader. Are we to look in vain for some young man who loves his country before everything else, who has the gifts of leadership, the education, and the will to place himself at the head of the great, voiceless, farming community and provide them with a platform wide enough for all and yet too narrow for none?

In the early days of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society there were to be found on its Committee men whose political or religious opinions differed almost as widely as the poles. They were called on to make no sacrifice of their cherished political or religious beliefs, but merely to leave them, temporarily, with their coats and hats outside the Committee room. It has been shown how loyally they observed the rule. Is it impossible to revive this spirit to-day in the hearts of those who hold contrary opinions? Were the men who guided the movement in its early days less patriotic than those of to-day? Did ever any one of them abjure his principles because he espoused the cause of co-operation? Most assuredly no. Plunkett's genius for bringing together men of widely divergent views had its origin in the I.A.O.S. Committee; it was again manifested in the Recess Committee, afterwards in the Irish Convention, of which he was Chairman, and, finally, in the Irish Dominion League. In all these instances, where his critics declared he was trying to mix oil and water, he accomplished the miracle to this extent that, at all events, those he brought

together, even where the main object failed, as in the case of the Irish Convention, came to understand and even to respect the views of their political opponents and to discuss them without heat or ill-feeling. Many people who, like myself, have never taken part in politics fail to see any great difference between the two principal political parties of to-day. They watch the fight going on, they listen with disgust and shame to the foul abuse bandied from side to side. In the Dail debates they find no dignity and but little constructive ability. They must wonder, as I often do, what the shade of Edmund Burke would think of the proceedings if he could sit in the Strangers' Gallery and listen!

If we cannot desist from our barren conflict, or prevail on the antagonists to do so, is there not in Ireland a sufficient number of sober-minded, peace-loving persons who will band themselves together in the Co-operative Movement and make an effort, however belated, to establish the foundation of the Co-operative Commonwealth of A. E.'s dreams?

We are constantly being told that legislation of a very drastic and far-reaching character is in contemplation which may completely alter the character and constitution of the Co-operative Movement by depriving it of its democratic essentials and substituting for self-control the domination of the State. In the present condition of affairs, it is not improbable, even more than likely, that such an enactment will be imposed on the Co-

operative Movement whether co-operators like it or not. As co-operators are totally without representation in the Dail, and as there are but a few deputies who represent the farming community, the measure will be framed by representatives of interests other than and, possibly hostile to, those of the co-operating farmers. Should this come to pass, all vestiges of the co-operation which meant so much to us and seemed so full of rich promise, will speedily vanish, and the societies so laboriously formed and the object of so much pride to those who directed them, will find themselves under the control of a new variety of Civil Servant and a discipline under which they may chafe in vain. It is possible that, under such a bureaucratic system, better material results might be attained, as is claimed for those creameries which are now being controlled by the Dairy Disposal Company, but all initiative will have disappeared and with it the vital spirit of co-operation with its fine aim—the making of character. It will be so materialised that it will differ in no essential from any great combine or trust. Even so, and granting the new régime a certain measure of commercial success, it is certain that no sort of business other than what a trader-ridden administration will permit, will be legalised, and the “legitimate trader” will come into his own and be free to fleece the community with impunity because the restraining menace of the co-operative store will have been removed from his path.

Contrast this Irish tendency towards a bureau-

cratic policy which seeks to dominate and control the voluntary movement for "self-help by mutual help" and impose upon it an officialdom, uninstructed in and regardless of co-operative principles, with the policy of Signor Mussolini in Italy—the most complete dictatorship of modern times. In Italy the widespread and perfectly organised Co-operative Movement, with its varied activities, is not only allowed perfect freedom of action, but is also encouraged in every way possible to develop them. As a matter of fact, voluntary co-operation is regarded by Signor Mussolini as one of the principal elements in his scheme for the regeneration of Italy.

Let those who think as I do, who believe in the value of co-operation, pause a little and ask themselves, "Must these things be?" Our country has been bountifully endowed by nature with a soil and a climate unrivalled by those of any other land. Is it to be said of us that we were slothful servants, despising or neglecting our natural gifts and possessions, at all events failing to take full advantage of them, and preferring our sordid political squabbles to honest work; or shall we put forth yet one more effort, in humble thankfulness for the gifts which Providence has bestowed upon us, and reassert our belief in co-operation, take our former courage and enthusiasm in both hands, declare our independence, and, not only declare it, but manifest it, by rallying to the support of the one organisation which stands between our farming community and those which seek to prey upon

it, between those who gain their livelihood by the most ancient and honourable industry and every other interest combined? We have it in our power to do so.

Is the beginning of forty-five years ago to be the end? Is all the arduous work of those years to be allowed to be counted among the many failures of our time? Was our foundation indeed a foundation of sand? Is the Irish character just as shifting? We cling to faiths, beliefs, ancient traditions; is there no virtue in this movement of ours which will capture our national imagination and pride? Its modest record is, nevertheless, a proud one to us who have striven for it. Yet it is only the beginning of a movement which has in it the germs of greatness unparalleled by any other which has swept over our country. We, who are now old, must perforce hand over its future guidance and promotion to a younger generation, and we can only hope that they will prove worthy of the trust reposed in them.

I have written this story in the hope that it may kindle in young hearts the spirit that animated the pioneers. It has been told in plain language, without the adornment of literary skill. If those who read it understand its simple lesson and will act upon it, they may yet see and realise the great aspiration of "Ireland a Nation".

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